

The Golden Thread of Truth Presents:



An Interfaith Program for Kids & Teens

A Twelve Month Program
Volume 1

www.TheGoldenThreadOfTruth.com

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www.TheGoldenThreadOfTruth.com

The Karish Group, Inc.

Marjorie Helms-Karish

Littleton, CO 80127

marjorie.helms@gmail.com

About The Golden Thread Of Truth.com

For generations, parents from all religious beliefs, cultures and lifestyles have shared stories with their children to teach life lessons. Stories from Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Native American traditions support the same underlying messages and demonstrate “The Golden Thread of Truth” in the world’s teachings. Love thy neighbor. You reap what you sow. We are stewards of the earth and each other. Treat others as you would like to be treated.

Our intention is to create an interactive experience for children around the lessons taught for generations from parents. Crafts help younger children deepen their understanding of the message of each story. Additional material with Tweens and Teens help them better understand the impact of these lessons on their individual lives. These lessons have been written for adults, teachers, mentors and parents; not for study by the student directly. For illustration, we use science, nature, history, art and parables from all the world’s religions and cultures.

Find more material and get free programs at
TheGoldenThreadofTruth.com!

**To My Incredible Husband
For Who You Are and What You Do**

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A note to adults, teachers, mentors and parents

For generations, parents from all religious beliefs, cultures and lifestyles have shared stories with their children. Stories from Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Native American traditions support the same underlying messages and demonstrate “The Golden Thread of Truth” in the world’s teachings. Love thy neighbor. You Reap what you Sow. We are stewards of the earth and each other. Treat others as you would like to be treated. There is a larger power at play in the Universe.

Each chapter is broken into two sections. The first, with accompanying lessons, quotes and crafts, is for everyone. The second, includes a more advanced discussion of the material with experiential activities to deepen the message for tweens and teens and help them understand the meaning of the lesson for THEIR lives. The word Life has been primarily used to represent Divine Intelligence/God. Examples from nature are used as metaphors for the way Life works.

Much more is available at our website: www.TheGoldenThreadOfTruth.com . We have books, Sunday School Curriculum, workshops, Summer Vacation Bible School type programs. Sign-up for our newsletter [at www.TheGoldenThreadOfTruth.com](http://www.TheGoldenThreadOfTruth.com) to stay-up to date on our latest developments and special offers or join us on www.facebook.com/thegoldenthreadoftruth, www.pinterest.com/ThreadOfTruth/ and [YouTube \[www.youtube.com/channel/UCbqJWt5bNYaSopM-Eij22Tg\]](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbqJWt5bNYaSopM-Eij22Tg).

My message to the kids: Thank you for who your are, your acceptance and respect for those around you and the gifts you bring to this planet.

Class Structure

Visit www.TheGoldenThreadOfTruth.com and our **YouTube Channel** for songs, videos and meditations mentioned throughout this book.

Each week is designed to be completed in an hour. The primary lesson and craft is for kindergarten through 3rd grade. The advanced material is designed for the older ages, 4th and 5th grade and above, to understand the lesson more deeply.

The third activity, for tweens and teens, is an interactive experience designed to understand how the message of the lesson impacts each of their lives.

We hope you find this material inspirational and fun!

Set-up: Before children start to arrive, set up music or video to play, put material out for the altar, set up activity area.

- Set-up Music: “You Are the Face of God”
- Set up Altar for the day
- Set-up Craft

Arrival:

- Children receive greeting and name tag
- Children move to activity/craft

Opening:

- Play “Surely the Presence” instrumental. This is the signal that students should move to the altar and form a standing horseshoe
- Students and teachers stand, sign and sing “Surely the Presence” as a group (Teachers lead students in signing)

Prayer:

- Prayer: led by practitioner or teacher
- Teacher explains the day and what students will be doing (lesson for the day)
-

Activities around the primary theme included in each weekly lesson.

- Readings
- Lessons
- Q&A
- Activity/Craft
- Advanced Material
- Interactive Teen Material

Friendship Circle: (time for children to share – joys and concerns for week)

If church school is large enough, break into small groups of 5 to 8 kids (if church school has several ages combined, split by age group)

Q. Who hasn't been here before? What does the craft mean to you?

Q. What are you going to tell your family about your craft?

Q. When are you going to tell your family about what you learned today? (All places are good times to talk with your family. When does your family talk the most? – in the car, at dinner, before bed, etc.)

- Play “You Are the Face of God” music. This is the signal that students should move to the worship area – a standing horseshoe around the altar
- Teachers share with the larger group some of their discussion from breakout group (if applicable)
- Collection/Stewardship

Closing:

- Greet parents/students share crafts/activities



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #1: Nature Parables from Jesus

Jesus used stories to teach life lessons. This month, we explore some of Jesus' parables, those with a natural theme. We are not necessarily instructed by Jesus, but instead invited to explore life through his eyes and stand with him to understand what the simple stories reveal. Parables to teach life lessons are found in every religion focus on the joys found in life.

Week #1: Don't Hide Your Light Under a Bushel

Week #2: The Tree and Its Fruits

Week #3: The Sower and the Seeds

Week #4: The Birds of Heaven & the Lilies of the Field



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NATURE PARABLES FROM JESUS

Week #1: Don't Hide Your Light Under a Bushel

Teacher's Notes: Jesus told many parables to his disciples so we will not be trying to cover all of them this month. This month, we have chosen four parables which each refer to an action in nature: Light, The Mustard Seed, The Tree and its Fruits, The Sower and the Seeds, and The Birds of Heaven and Lilies of the Field. The main message of the parables can be interpreted from many perspectives but we will be using Charles Fillmore's Metaphysical Bible Dictionary for a New Thought interpretation. Enjoy these stories of nature as spring unfolds where you live.

Main Message: Jesus used stories to teach life lessons. In the parables, we are not necessarily instructed by Jesus, but instead invited to explore life through his eyes and stand with him to understand what the simple stories reveal.

- Jesus' stories are retold in the New Testament in the Bible.
- Parables to teach life lessons are found in every religion.

Readings

Luke 11:33: "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light."

SOM 332:41: The higher the sense of Truth, the greater will be the realization of the uniqueness of individual character and personality. The real Self is God-given and cannot be denied. It is the place where God comes to a point of Individualized and Personified Expression. "I am the light of the world."

Lesson: Don't Hide Your Light Under a Bushel

The book of Luke (11) in the Bible recounts a lesson Jesus taught. Many times, Jesus had a crowd that followed him to hear him preach a sermon. On this day, he said, "More blessed are all who hear the Word of God and put it into practice."

To explain what this meant, he used an analogy:

"No one lights a lamp and hides it! Instead, he puts it on a lamp stand to give light to all who enter the room. Your eyes light up your inward being. A pure eye lets sunshine into your soul. A lustful eye shuts out the light and plunges you into darkness. So watch out that the sunshine isn't blotted out. If you are filled with light within, with no dark corners, then your face will be radiant too, as though a floodlight is beamed upon you."

You are an individualized expression of God. When Jesus spoke of lighting a lamp to create a light, he was saying that each of you are a light in the world. No one creates a light and hides it. Lights are created to remove the darkness.

We use light and candles in many ways to symbolize that Jesus is the light that shows us the way and that we are lights in the world.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why did Jesus tell stories?

A1. To help explain his message.

Q2. Where do you use lights in your spiritual practice?

A2. On the altar, at Christmas Eve services, etc.

Q3. How can you be “filled with light within”?

A3. By knowing that you are an individual expression of God.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Represents the light that each of us are.

Craft: Light under a bushel (if you have less time, just the tea light in a plastic cup will work as well)

Materials: Disposable punch cups

Plastic tea lights (or real tea lights)

Assorted colors of tissue paper

Glue

Paint brush



Directions:

Cut tissue paper into small shapes.

Mix glue 2 parts glue to one part water. Mix in a cup.

Paint the outside of the cup, sticking on tissue paper as you go.

When dry, put the tea light inside.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Light is the symbol of our truth and life, that we are joyous creative expressions of the Divine.

Light is used in most world religions to remember our connection to the Divine Spirit. (Source: Wikipedia)

Hindu: In almost all Hindu homes, lamps are lit daily, sometimes before an altar. In some houses, the oil lamps, or candles, are lit at dawn, and in some homes, twice a day - at dawn and dusk - and in a few, they are maintained continuously.

Buddhism: A very large carved Thai candle is a traditional part of Buddhist ritual observances. Along with incense and flowers, candles (or some other type of light source, such as butter lamps) are placed before Buddhist shrines or images of the Buddha as a show of respect.

Christianity: The candle is commonly used in worship both for decoration and ambiance, and as a symbol that represents the light of God or, specifically, the light of Christ.

Judaism: A pair of Shabbat candles are lit on Friday evening prior to the start of the weekly Sabbath celebration. On Saturday night, a special candle with several wicks and usually braided is lit for the Havdalah ritual marking the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the new week.

Fun Riddle Activity: If you are in a dark room with a candle, a wood stove and a gas lamp and you only have one match, what do you light first? (Answer: the match)

Tween & Teen Activity

The Bible has many verses about your light. A few selected below:

Matthew 5:14-16

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works.”

John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Proverbs 6:23

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.

1 John 1:5

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Activity: Write a short story about letting your light shine!



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NATURE PARABLES FROM JESUS

Week #2: The Tree and Its Fruits

Teacher's Notes: The parable this week has different translations in different bibles. We are using "The Living Bible." Ernest Holmes discussed Matthew 7 under the title "God and Creation." Charles Fillmore states the fruit of the vine represents man's renewal in the consciousness of spiritual life. We will discuss how the quality of the fruit is an indication of the purity of the original thought.

Main Message: The fruit we see in our lives is a reflection of our thoughts or way of being. Our lives mirror the seeds we plant and nurture.

- Truth alone endures.
- A tree's quality is reflected in its fruit just as a man's thoughts are reflected in his actions.

Readings:

Matthew 7:17: Different kinds of fruit trees can quickly be identified by examining their fruit. A variety that produces delicious fruit never produces an inedible kind. And a tree producing an inedible kind can't produce what is good.

SOM 436:2¹: We are to know the Truth by its fruits. The certain estimate of reality is ever evidenced by its worth in actual living. We are not to separate life from living nor God from His creation. One is the cause, the other the effect. The invisible things of God are manifested through the visible, and unless the invisible thought and desire of man is in line with Truth, his acts will fall into error. While we are told not to judge, we are clearly warned not to fall under the illusion of accepting the false for the true.

Lesson: The Parable of the Tree and its Fruits (Matthew 8:15-20)

“Beware of false teachers who come disguised as harmless sheep, but are wolves and will tear you apart. You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You need never confuse grapevines with thorn bushes or figs with thistles. Different kinds of fruit trees can quickly be identified by examining their fruit. A variety that produces delicious fruit never produces an inedible kind. And a tree producing an inedible kind can't produce what is good. So the trees having the inedible fruit are chopped down and thrown on the fire. Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit produced.”

What examples of 'fruit' do you see in people around you? What examples of 'fruit' do you produce?

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What 'fruit' is in alignment with the Truth?

A1. Kindness, compassion, generosity, humility, etc.

Q2. What actions can be considered 'bitter fruit'?

A2. Anger, greed, hatred, ignorance, etc.

Q3. Why can't a tree producing inedible fruit also produce fruit that is good?

A3. The thought (or seed) that created the tree determined the quality of fruit it would produce.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Let's eat Figs! This week we eat some different fruits that children may or may not be familiar with.

Craft: Fun Fruits

Materials:

Share fruits you can find in your local supermarket.

Examples: Figs, pomegranates, kumquats, star fruit, passion fruit, guava or dragon fruit.

Directions:

Cut up and sample. See if the children can name the fruits as each one is offered.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

We are taught not to fall under the delusion of accepting the false for the true. But, how can we know the difference?

The Oak and the Reed²

An Oak tree and a Reed grew side by side on the brim of a river. From time to time they spoke to each other, but they were not good friends. The mighty Oak considered himself far superior to the humble Reed and, from a great height, looked down upon him.

“You have no pride,” the Oak told the Reed. “You bend and bow to the lightest breeze. You should be more dignified. You should stand erect as I do. No wind can make me stoop or lower myself.”

Just then a fierce storm sprung up. Lightning flashed and a wild gale shook the trees. The Oak stood firm for a short while but his very stiffness was his undoing. The gale struck hard against him, tore his branches, broke his biggest boughs, and toppled him into the river. The Reed swayed and bent, letting the wind blow over him. When the storm passed he was still growing on the rim of the river.

Discussion: What does this fable tell us about inner thoughts? (Moral: Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall)

How does the arrogance of the tree tie in with the Truth? (Respect for others' strengths)

Tween & Teen Activity

In the verses leading up to the parable, Jesus shares an important lesson on prayer that is also part of the Sermon on the Mount.

7 Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you.

8 For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened.

Ernest Holmes wrote: “The certain estimate of reality is ever evidenced by its worth in actual living. We are not to separate life from living nor God from His creation. One is the cause, the other the effect. The invisible things of God are manifested through the visible, and unless the invisible thought and desire of man is in line with Truth, his acts will fall into error.” ¹

In small groups, write sentences about the importance of prayer and how it relates to both the Sermon on the Mount and your lives.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Nature Parables from Jesus

Week #3: The Sower and the Seeds

Teacher's Notes: In today's parable of the Sower and the Seeds, soil represents the mind and the seeds represent ideas. Seeds fall on the footpath and are not received, like an idea that is not received. Seeds (ideas) that fall in the rocks are noticed and then forgotten. Seeds (ideas) that fall in the thistles are choked off and the ones that fall on the fertile ground are accepted and bear fruit. We need to notice and accept the voice of God and treasure the messages. Today's lesson is adapted from Science of Mind Religious Educational Program, by Iris Turk and William Hornaday.

Main Message: Manifestations are always taking place, everywhere around us, from the thoughts and ideas put into law. There are no restraining or inhibiting actions that obstruct the harvest.

- We must cultivate our minds (soil) to receive the good if we are to experience good results.
- Good is without bounds.

Readings:

Luke 8:10: To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God.

SOM 39:3 ¹: The gardener goes forth in faith to sow his seeds. He has learned that as he sows, so shall he reap; that the law works for all alike. We must accustom ourselves to the concept of the impersonalness of the law, the availability of the law, and the mechanical accuracy of the law. If we can conceive only a little good, that is as much as we can experience. We must instill into the mind the fundamental proposition that good is without bounds.

Lesson: The Parable of the Sower and the Seeds (Luke 8:4-15)

One day Jesus spoke to a large crowd that gathered to hear him. Many others were still on the way, coming from other towns. Jesus shared a story of seeds in fertile soil.

“A farmer went out to his field to sow grain. As he scattered the seed on the ground, some of it fell on a footpath and was trampled on and the birds came and ate it as it lay exposed. Other seed fell on shallow soil with rock beneath. The seed began to grow but soon withered and died for lack of moisture. Other seed landed in thistle patches, and the young grain stalks were soon choked out. Some other fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop a hundred times as large as he had planted.”



The people in the crowd asked Jesus what the story meant.

“The seed is the same as a message from God to you. You hear these messages when you are listening with your intuition and your heart. You may hear the message when you meditate, pray or any time you are still. The ground upon which the seed falls represents your mind. If your mind is hard like a footpath, not open to new ideas, then the seed has no place to take

root and grow. The shallow soil is like a mind that briefly listens to God's message but soon returns to fear, uncertainty or doubt. The seed once again cannot take root because the mind turns away from the idea. The thistle patches represent a mind that is preoccupied with worry or focus on pleasures. The seeds are choked from no attention and soon wither and die. But, the good soil represents a mind that is honest, open and at peace. This mind will cling to the message of God and nurture it."

What is Jesus teaching us in this parable?

- First, we must listen, or we will not hear 'good' and we must look for 'good' or we may not see it.
- Second, when we receive a good thing, we must treasure it, desire to keep it so it will stay with us (take root).
- Third, we must keep out negative thoughts (thorns).
- Fourth, we must practice (cultivate) loving the good.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why is it important to be free of worry?

A1. With an open heart, we can embrace God's love.

Q2. Why did Jesus tell us parables?

A2. So we could better understand how our mind works and always have a good life.

Q3. Where can your mind receive an idea from?

A3. From anywhere around or within you.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Make an Origami Seed Packet to remind us to protect and cherish our ideas.

Craft: Origami Seed Packet

Materials:

Colorful paper

Seeds (any kind)

Markers/stickers to decorate

Directions:

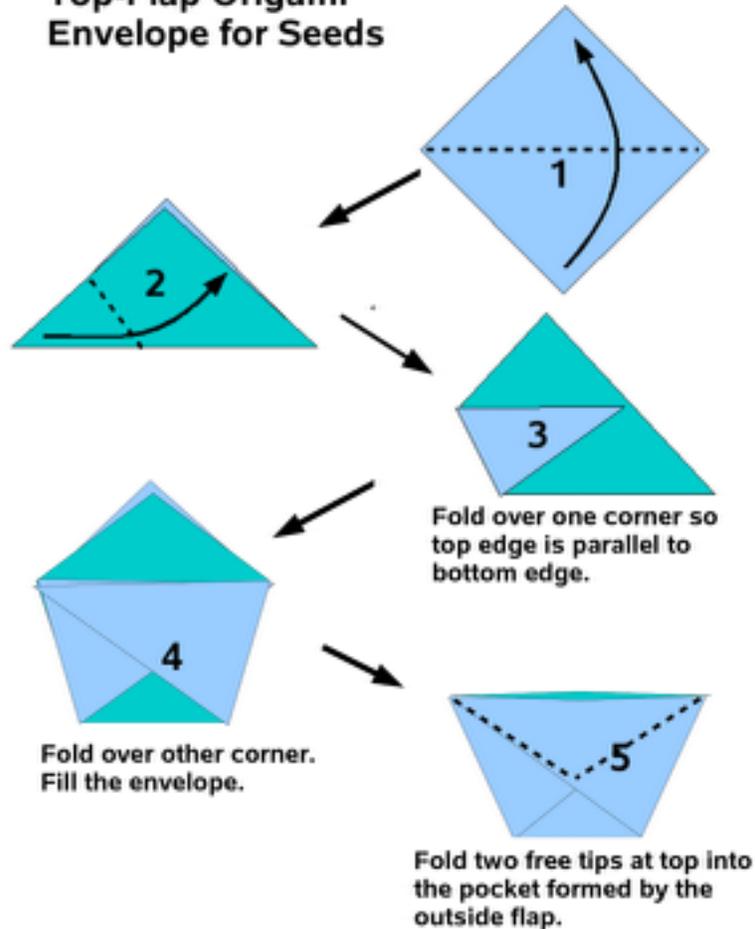
Cut a 6" x 6" square

Fold per the instructions

Fill with seeds



Top-Flap Origami Envelope for Seeds



(diagrams adapted from Seeds of Diversity Canada's "How to Save Your Own Seeds")

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Review the Parable of the Sower and the Seeds from a Metaphysical Perspective

Say the soil, or dirt, is your mind that listens or receives an idea (seed). The soil receives the

seed and the mind receives the idea. For example, suppose a mom tells her four boys that it is time for dinner and they should wash their hands and come to the table.

- One child is in the neighbors' garden and does not hear or receive the message.
- One child starts toward the house, sees his brother in the neighbors' garden, and decides to tell him to come to dinner. Then, when he gets there, he becomes so interested in their game that he joins them, forgetting why he had come.
- The third boy replies, "I'm not hungry" and continues his play.
- The fourth boy obeys his mother and he stops playing to wash his hands before dinner.

Question: How do the thoughts of each of these boys represent the soil in the parable? Each boy had the same idea, (the seed) directed (sowed) to his mind (soil), but the idea fell differently on each.

- The footpath is soil too hard on the surface to receive the seed (the boy that didn't hear his mother's message)
- The stony soil receives but lacks the depth for the roots to hold (the boy that heard but then forgot)
- Thorns and thistles choke out the young plant (I'm not hungry)
- Only good soil allows the plant to grow and bear fruit (the boy that received the idea and followed directions)

Tween & Teen Activity

The Parable of the Soil and the Seeds demonstrates that life is filled with good ideas (seeds). We must cultivate our minds (soil) to receive this good if we are to experience good results (fruit).

How do you 'cultivate your mind'? What does this mean?

In small groups, give examples of how your ideas have fallen on fertile or infertile ground.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Nature Parables from Jesus

Week #4: The Birds of Heaven & the Lilies of the Field

Teacher's Notes: This week's parable is a powerful lesson about faith. The core of faith is knowing our oneness with God. The story tells us we cannot 'serve two masters.' Anxiety literally means 'being of two minds.' Anxiety causes paralysis of action because of fear of the outcome. 'Serving two masters' also alludes to the division between wanting to stand in our knowing with God but also putting our energies and attentions on the world's definition of success. So the main question raised by this parable is: "Who is the master of your life?" Our master is where we put our thoughts, ideas, desires and values. Are we putting our energies in wealth, prestige, positions of power and recognition outside of ourselves? We each decide whether to put our energies into God or 'mammon.' (Mammon is derived from that which is temporary and outside of ourselves. The idea of treasure is that which is stored underground, hidden away, hoarded; that which is not placed in circulation, but is restricted in its use. ~Charles Fillmore) Jesus uses the example of the birds and the flowers to illustrate that God always provides.

Main Message: At each moment, we have a choice to live from a place of anxiety and fear, or from a place of peace and serenity.

- Everything we need is within us.
- Focus on your oneness with God, not worry and anxiety.

Readings:

Matt 6:34: Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

SOM 58:51: We should work, not with anxiety but with expectancy; not by coercion but with conviction; not through compulsion but in a state of conscious recognition and receptivity. We do not have to drive or push but we must accept and believe. We should then leave everything to the Law, expecting a full and complete proof of our faith. We shall not be disappointed nor chagrined, for the Law is our faithful servant.

Lesson: The Birds of Heaven & the Lilies of the Field (Matthew 6:24-34)

Jesus uses examples from nature, birds and flowers, to show how God is within each of us and our needs and desires are always met.

“Each of us has a choice. We can put our energy and attention in our Divine oneness with God, or we can put our energy and attention in things outside of ourselves; money, power, desires not serving us. There is no way to put your attention on both at the same time. And, the things outside of yourself are temporary and can never be completely acquired. If you focus on material things to fulfill you and make you feel good about yourself, it will not happen because only your awareness of your own inner perfection will give you peace. So, there is no way to serve two ‘masters’ - God and money.”



Jesus' advice is: "Don't put your attention on things, food or clothing. You already have a life and a body and they are far more important than what to eat and wear. Look at the birds! They do not worry about what to eat. Look at the field lilies! They do not worry about how they are clothed. Yet, they are far more beautiful than anything a king would wear. Spirit is showering riches upon every creature and plant. And, each living man is a manifestation of Divinity. Spirit is within each of us. We have no concerns about tomorrow and we focus on today. You can each have faith that all your needs and desires are met. Put your attention on your oneness with the Divine and carry your peace in your heart."

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What does it mean that you can't serve two masters?

A1. You can't focus on your divine spirit and focus on the need for things outside of yourself at the same time.

Q2. Why are material possessions temporary?

A2. The thrill that comes from having acquired them doesn't last.

Q3. Why is inner peace permanent?

A3. When you feel the peace in your heart and oneness with your Divinity, no one can take it away from you.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Lilies are a symbol from the parable but also a symbol of renewal. Use a handprint cut out and pipe cleaners to make beautiful lilies.

Craft: Handprint Lily Craft

Materials:

White paper

Green construction paper

Pencil

Scissors

Green and orange pipe cleaners

Tape



Directions:

1. Fold a piece of green construction paper in half and trace a long leaf shape. Cut out from the fold so you get a double leaf joined in the middle.
2. Trace your hand on white paper and cut out.
3. Take a short length of orange pipe cleaner and twist it to the end of a long green pipe cleaner so the ends stick up like a "V" with droopy ears. This is the flower's center.
4. Wrap the handprint around the top of the green pipe cleaner and tape in place.
5. Poke a hole in the middle of the double leaves and thread onto the pipe cleaner stem.
6. Wrap tape around the stem below the leaves so they stay in place.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Look at the quotes below about faith. They are shared from people of many different religions. What do they all have in common?

All who call on God in true faith, earnestly from the heart, will certainly be heard, and will receive what they have asked and desired. ~Martin Luther

When you focus on being a blessing, God makes sure that you are always blessed in abundance. ~Joel Osteen

That deep emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God. ~Albert Einstein

Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother. ~Khalil Gibran

Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe. ~Saint Augustine

A man of courage is also full of faith. ~Marcus Tullius Cicero

Faith is not something to grasp, it is a state to grow into. ~Mahatma Gandhi

Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible. ~Thomas Aquinas

Tween & Teen Activity

This week, invite the teens to read the parable out loud as a group. If you have more than one Bible, it is fun to read the different versions and discuss the differences.

Matthew 6:24-34

Matthew 24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 25 Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. 34 Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #2: Buddha's Love

Buddha was a man who embarked on the search for truth and experienced enlightenment. Buddhism is a faith with an emphasis on individuals looking at and thinking about their own lives. Buddhism shows us how to understand ourselves and how to cope with our daily problems. Buddha believed that all the sorrow of the world was caused by selfishness. He believed the secret to life was love. This month, we share delightful Zen stories and focus on the basics of the teachings of Buddha.

Week #1: Release and Love

Week #2: Generosity - Love in Action

Week #3: Stillness - Feeling the Presence

Week #4: Feeling Compassion



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

BUDDHA'S LOVE

Week #1: Release and Love

Teacher's Notes: This month, we focus on the teachings of Buddha, the master teacher of the Buddhist faith. Nirvana Day is a Mahayana Buddhist holiday commemorating the death of the Buddha. It is observed on February 8 or 15. Nirvana is the idyllic spiritual condition, the ultimate goal of a Buddhist. The day itself is spent in meditation, reflecting upon those who have more recently died, and special food preparations are made. Sometimes gifts of money or clothing are exchanged. This week, we discuss Buddha's life and message.

Main Message: Release desires/wants and concentrate on love of yourself and others. We celebrate Buddha's life this month on Nirvana Day. Nirvana is the idyllic spiritual condition, the ultimate goal of a Buddhist.

- Who was Buddha?
- What did Buddha teach?

Readings:

A generous heart, kind speech and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity. – The Buddha

SOM 344-1¹: The great mystics while sensing this Unity – the Universality of all things- have also sensed the individualization of Being and the individuality of Man as a Divine Reality. Tagore, in seeking to explain this, says that the individual is immersed in, but not lost in, Nirvana, and he uses the illustration ... “as an arrow is lost in its mark,” still remaining an arrow. The mysticism of Buddha did not teach the annihilation of the soul, but the eternity of an ever-expanding principle of the soul.

Lesson: The Story of Buddha

The Buddha was born Siddhartha Gautama around 560BC. His father was the king and his mother was the queen so he was born a wealthy prince. From the time he was a little boy, he was troubled whenever he saw anyone old or sick or dead. His father tried to keep him from these troubling images allowing him to only see beauty and happiness.

But, when he was thirty he saw suffering again and he felt deep compassion and wished to become a Buddha, or holy man, with the wisdom and power to free them from this pain. He asked his parents if he could leave the castle to find a peaceful place in the forest where he could quickly become a Buddha, or “The Awakened One.” To be awakened means to awake from the sleep of ignorance and see things as they really are.

His father did not want him to leave the castle so he surrounded him with music and dancers and food and excitement hoping all these pleasures would keep him in the castle. But the prince was not attracted to these pleasures as he realized that these did not take away suffering for more than one moment.

So the prince left the castle to go to the forest to meditate. At first he followed a very severe path, nearly starving himself to death, but then he realized the ‘middle path’ was better, not having too much, nor too little. One day, during a long (7 day) meditation, he became a perfect and fully enlightened Buddha, a person who has become completely free of all faults.

Buddha has great compassion and the wish to end the suffering of every single living being. He benefits all beings by sending out blessings to them, so that sometimes even the smallest of animals develop peaceful and kind states of mind. He spent the rest of his life helping others understand how to become enlightened.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why did Buddha leave the comfort of his life within the palace?

A1. He knew he could not help others if he was isolated from all pain and suffering. He wished to attain total enlightenment as a Buddha and live a life at peace.

Q2. Why does suffering cause pain?

A2. The Buddha taught that wishing, wanting and desiring are the cause of suffering. We produce our own suffering by the way we think and act. And, we also can get rid of suffering by changing the way we think and act.

Q3. What did Buddha believe brought inner peace?

A3. The Buddha believed that life was important but all must not be taken too seriously. He knew life changed and flowed and when we flowed with our lives without resistance, we could experience happiness and peace.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: The lotus flower is a well-known symbol of Buddhism. Its growth from the mud to above the water's surface represents the journey from darkness to light. To explain this concept to a child you could make this simple lotus flower using pipe cleaners. It makes a pretty decoration, or could be given away to family and friends. You could also add beads to the pipe cleaners, which is a great fine motor activity for little hands.

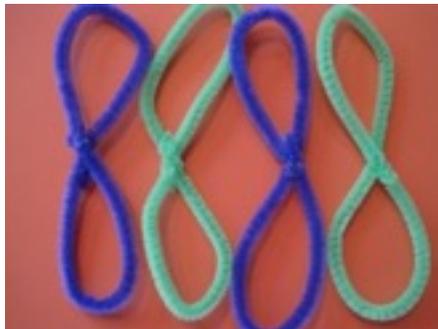
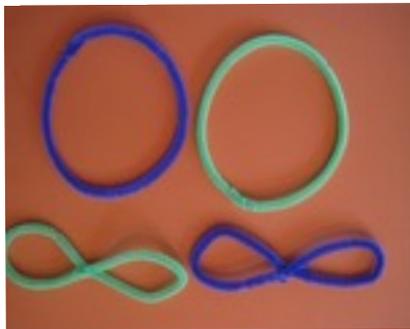


Craft: Pipe Cleaner Lotus Flowers

Materials:

5 pipe cleaners of any color

Directions: Make circles out of 4 pipe cleaners then twist to make figure eights. Use 5th pipe cleaner to attach the four figure eights together. Bend half circles upward to create flower.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

The Buddha taught "The Four Noble Truths"

- The suffering of physical life
- The cause of suffering (self-desire and self-will)
- The end of suffering (overcoming self-desire and self-will)
- Nirvana (or freedom from all suffering and self-desire by following the Noble Eightfold Path)

Play "The Buddha's Stepping Stones" game (see Teen Activity)

Tween & Teen Activity

Play "The Buddha's Stepping Stones" game

Make eight stepping stones out of cardboard with Buddha's eight steps written on them and lay them out on the floor. Play some music and dance. When the music stops, all stand on a stepping stone. Anyone not on a stone is out. Whoever is on stone 1 says what his stone means. Then remove this stone and continue the music. Next time whoever is on stone 2 says what it means and so on. The child left on stone 8 is the winner.

The Noble Eightfold Path

1. Right understanding
2. Right thought
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right living
6. Right effort
7. Right remembrance
8. Right meditation



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

BUDDHA'S LOVE

Week #2: Generosity - Love in Action

Main Message: We focus on the basics of the teachings of Buddha, the master teacher of the Buddhist faith. This week's story is "The Most Important Thing," a tale of a man who travelled many miles to hear from Buddha the key to the most important thing in life.

- Buddha believed that selfishness is the cause of the world's woes.
- Being kind to self and others brings happiness.

Readings:

"Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." – The Buddha

SOM 428-2¹: In the midst of this drama of human existence, Jesus declared that the meek shall inherit the earth. Let us inquire if his teaching is a true one. Do we teach our children to follow the steps of a Caesar and a Napoleon? Or do we tell them the story of Jesus or Buddha? The cross is mightier than the crown and we teach our children that LOVE

MASTERS EVERYTHING! The meek shall inherit the earth. To whom have our artists turned for inspiration and that quickening power which enables them to depict the ideal? Not to the

Generosity Worksheet

List ways you can use your senses to help others.

	Heart:
	Brain:
	Hands:
	Eyes:
	Mouth:
	Ears:

The Golden Thread of Truth: Youth Church Worksheet

warlords, not even the captains of industry, but to the meek.

Lesson: The Most Important Thing:

Once, a famous Chinese poet wanted to study the wisdom of the Buddha. He traveled a long distance to see a famous teacher and asked him, "What is the most important thing in the Buddha's teaching?"

"Don't harm anyone and only do good," replied the teacher.

"This is just too stupid!" exclaimed the poet. "You are supposed to be a great teacher, so I traveled miles and miles to see you. And now is that all you can come up with? Even a three year old could say that!"

"Maybe a three year old could say it, but it is very hard to put into practice, even for a very old man like myself," said the teacher.

- From The wisdom of the crows and other Buddhist tales

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why is "Don't harm anyone and only do good" hard to put into practice?

A1. We sometimes wish to change others or we judge others. Only good would be to view all others with compassion and heart.

Q2. What are ways you can do "good" in your life?

A2. Be kind to others. Help others (hold the door for someone, smile and say hello, etc.)

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Every karmic 'debt' or 'seed' from the past brings with it an opportunity to grow in love and understanding. As the proverb says, "Every cloud has a silver lining." Usually we learn most, and grow most, through difficulties and suffering. But instead of grumbling and being unhappy when we have to face difficulties, we can learn to make the best of them and thank God for every opportunity. When we suffer, we can learn important lessons. Everything that happens in our life is an opportunity to help us grow closer to God and more loving to others.

Craft/Activity: Generosity Worksheet: Use the chart attached to list the ways you can use your senses to help others.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

The Noble Eightfold Path is one of the principal teachings of the Buddha, who described it as the way leading to the cessation of suffering and the achievement of self-awakening. It is used to develop insight into the true nature of phenomena (or reality) and to eradicate greed, hatred and delusion. Use the chart below to discuss how you could practice each of the steps on the 8-fold path to enlightenment. The path is separated into three major sections, Wisdom (How to use your thought), Conduct (How to approach your actions) and Concentration (How to strengthen your connection to Spirit).

Division	Eightfold Path factors	How do you practice it?
Wisdom	1. Right Understanding	Right understanding is to look at the world with an open mind. You can view the world around you without confusion or fear. You can view the world with a belief that all is in perfect right action.
	2. Right intention	Each of us should always try to remove any characteristics about ourselves that we know are wrong.
Ethical conduct	3. Right speech	Do not lie or speak badly about others. Stay away from gossip.
	4. Right action	Do not steal, or treat others badly.
	5. Right living	Never participate in any activity that causes harm to other living things.
Concentration	6. Right effort	Continually work on bettering yourself in all thoughts, words and deeds.
	7. Right mindfulness	Always be alert to each word you speak and how your consciousness affects yourself and others around you.
	8. Right concentration	The art of meditation

Tween & Teen Activity

Look at the 8-fold path to enlightenment.

Go through each step and discuss if you could constantly live from the description of each step. What are different ways you could react to the following scenarios?

1. Your best friend is moving out of state.
2. You get an F on your report card.
3. You are sick and cannot go to the prom.

Division	Eightfold Path factors	How do you practice it?
Wisdom	1. Right Understanding	Right understanding is to look at the world with an open mind. You can view the world around you without confusion or fear. You can view the world with a belief that all is in perfect right action.
	2. Right intention	Each of us should always try to remove any characteristics about ourselves that we know are wrong.
Ethical conduct	3. Right speech	Do not lie or speak badly about others. Stay away from gossip.
	4. Right action	Do not steal, or treat others badly.
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	7. Right mindfulness	Always be alert to each word you speak and how your consciousness affects yourself and others around you.
	8. Right concentration	The art of meditation



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

BUDDHA'S LOVE

Week #3: Stillness - Feeling the Presence

Main Message: This week's story, "A Heavy Load," has been told by Zen Buddhists for hundreds of years. It is a classic story of how our minds and thoughts are within our control. We control how we feel, how we react and the circumstances of our life. Buddhists believe that the best way to exercise this practice of mindfulness is through the practice of meditation. Through meditation, we gain control of our minds and how we think and act.

- Meditation is a way to exercise your power to manage your thoughts.
- You have control over how you think and act.

Readings:

“We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world.” – The Buddha

SOM 185-2¹: To daily meditate on the Perfect Life, and to daily embody the great Ideal, is a royal road to freedom to that “peace which passeth understanding,” and is happiness to the soul of man. Let us learn to see as God must, with a perfect vision. Let us seek the good and the true and believe in them with our whole heart, even though every man we meet is filled with suffering, and limitation appears at all sides. We cannot afford to believe in imperfections for a single second, to do so is to doubt God; it is to believe in a Power apart from ourselves: “Perfect God *within me*, Perfect Life *within me*, which is God, come forth into expression through me as that which I am; lead me ever into the paths of perfections and cause me to see only the Good.” By this practice, the soul will be illumined and will acquaint itself with God and be at peace. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Lesson: The Heavy Load

Two traveling monks reached a town where there was a young woman waiting to step out of her sedan chair. The rains had made deep puddles and she couldn't step across without spoiling her silken robes. She stood there, looking very cross and impatient. She was scolding her attendants. They had nowhere to place the packages they held for her, so they couldn't help her across the puddle.

The younger monk noticed the woman, said nothing, and walked by. The older monk quickly picked her up and put her on his back, transported her across the water, and put her down on the other side. She didn't thank the older monk, she just shoved him out of the way and departed.

As they continued on their way, the young monk was brooding and preoccupied. After several hours, unable to hold his silence, he spoke out. “That woman back there was very selfish and rude, but you picked her up on your back and carried her. Then she didn't even thank you!”

“I set the woman down hours ago,” the older monk replied. “Why are *you* still carrying her?”
~ Zen Buddhist literature

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Did the traveling monks have a good or bad experience?

A1. It depends on if you are thinking of the older or the younger monk.

Q2. How can the same event have different effects on different people?

A2. Our thoughts control our actions and our lives.

Q3. Who was more like Buddha – the older or younger monk?

A3. The older monk was not attached to the situation. He did not have any need to be thanked. He helped others without judgment. He was more like Buddha.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Beads become prayer beads when making and using them is part of a meditation practice. If you string beads as prayer beads, then each time you touch them you'll remember their purpose. In that moment, you will feel your feet on the floor and your grounding on the earth. If you continually bring small moments of silence into your life, you will stay in the present moment, and your opportunities to notice spiritual connections will grow.

Most experts ascribe an Oriental origin to prayer beads; but man's natural tendency to count, especially prayers, may safely be assumed to have spontaneously suggested fingers, pebbles, knotted cords, and strings of beads or berries as a means of counting, when it was desired to say a specific number of prayers.

Prayer is a way of being silent and knowing that God is within, and God is taking care of our every need.

Prayer beads can be made with beads on pipe cleaners or cord or wire. Since paracord is popular with kids these days, these instructions (and youtube demonstration video) can assist you with the paracord. Paracord can be found at any hobby shop.

Either way, make sure the children attached a good or kind thought to each knot/ bead.

Thoughts can be used multiple times (i.e. love, love, kindness, peace, harmony, love)

Craft: Paracord Prayer Beads

Materials:

3 - 6 foot paracord strings, cut 2 lengths per student
Or
2 ft paracord strings and 10 beads per student

Directions:

How to tie Paracord Prayer Beads

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tv4up0y9FUE>



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Discuss what each character in “A Heavy Load” was thinking and how it impacted their minds, hearts and spirits.

Characters:

1. The young woman
2. Her attendants (2)
3. The younger monk
4. The older monk

Assign children to play each of the characters in “A Heavy Load.” After they act out each of the scenes (while the teacher reads it slowly), ask them how they felt as the character (sad, anxious, peaceful, happy). Have the children change and play other characters if there is time.

Tween & Teen Activity

Meditation - Lead the teens in a breathing meditation. For 5 to 10 minutes, sit quietly and concentrate on the breath. It may help some to think of an affirmation during the meditation. Breathe in while thinking “I am love.” Breath out while thinking “I am peace.”



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

BUDDHA'S LOVE

Week #4: Feeling Compassion

Main Message: Feel compassion with a generous heart, kind speech and a life of service. This week we share the story, “The Farmer’s Luck”, which has roots in Taoism, going back several thousand years. It is a wonderful illustration of how the value that we attach to events in our lives can affect our peace of mind. By having compassion for others in all circumstances, we can stay present to the current moment.

1. Do not overrate what you have received, nor envy others.
2. He who envies others does not obtain peace of mind.

Readings

“Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.” – The Buddha

SOM 78-2¹: One of the most difficult problems to realize is that when we are dealing with the Law of Mind, we are dealing with an absolutely impersonal thing. It knows how to create without knowing what It creates. Therefore, we must distinguish between the Law of Mind and the Spirit which uses the Law. The ancients taught that there is an Infinite Self-Knowing spirit (one of the oldest sayings in the world is: “Spirit is the Power that knows Itself.”) in addition to which there is an Infinite Law which knows how to do but does not care what It does. This Law is the Karmic Law of Buddha, “the Law that binds the ignorant and frees the wise,” as Anna Besant stated it. It is the Cause and Effect of the West; but It is not to be confused with Kismet, which is fate, because *Its tendency can be changed*.

Lesson: The Farmer’s Luck

There was once an old farmer who worked his crops for many years.

One day, his horse ran away. Upon hearing the news, his neighbors came to visit.

“Such bad luck,” they said sympathetically.

“Maybe,” the farmer replied.

The next morning the horse returned, bringing with it two other wild horses.

“Such good luck!” the neighbors exclaimed.

“Maybe,” replied the farmer.

The following day, his son tried to ride one of the untamed horses, was thrown off, and broke his leg.

Again, the neighbors came to offer their sympathy on his misfortune.

“Such bad luck,” they said.

“Maybe,” answered the farmer.

The day after that, military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army to fight in the war. Seeing that the son’s leg was broken, they passed him by.

“Such good luck!” cried the neighbors.

“Maybe,” said the farmer.

~Story with roots in Taoism, going back several thousand years

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why can you not tell good luck from bad luck?

A1. You can't because you never know what will happen next.

Q2. Why does compassion develop inner strength?

A2. Because before you can be compassionate to others, you have to be compassionate with yourself.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Japanese origami began sometime after Buddhist monks carried paper to Japan during the 6th century. Paper disintegrates easily so no early origami forms are left for historians to study. Paper is very important to Buddhists because it is how they delivered the message of their scripture. Also, the Japanese use paper, and origami – most notably cranes – in many sacred ceremonies.

Zen Buddhism can be seen in the practice of origami. Looking at a plain piece of paper transform into a beautiful creation, just by folding paper, is a symbol of simplistic joy.

The Origami Fortune Teller should be developed to share spiritual truths with the children. After it is created, the child may write short words of inspiration under the folds, i.e. You are Love, You are Joy, You are Peace, etc. Or, for older children, they may write longer Buddhist sayings.

It is also a great way for kids to connect with one another and have fun!



Craft/Activity: Origami Fortune Teller

Materials:

1 sheet of colored paper, cut into 8x8" square.

Directions:



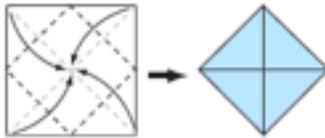
Origami Fortune Teller

origami-fun

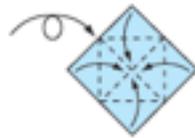
www.origami-fun.com



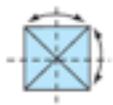
1. Start with white side up. Fold diagonally in both directions.



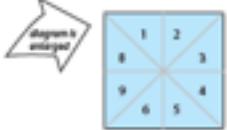
2. Fold each corner into the center point.



3. Turn over and again fold each corner into the center point.



4. Fold in half along creases shown, both ways, and open.

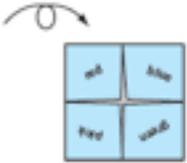


5. Number each segment from 1-8.

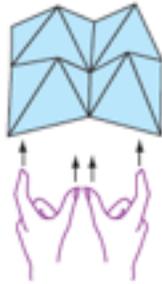


6. Open up each flap and write a fortune in each segment. Here are some fortunes:

- 1. You will get an 'S' on a test.
- 2. You will be rich.
- 3. You will have very good luck today.
- 4. You will have many friends.
- 5. Do a good deed today.
- 6. Someone will call you today.
- 7. You will go to a party soon.
- 8. Be careful on Tuesday.

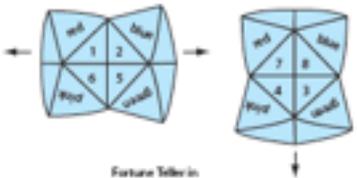


7. Turn the model over and write a colour on each flap as shown.



Finished Fortune Teller.

Use fingers to open.



Fortune Teller in action.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Buddha said, “The whole secret of existence is to have no fear. Never fear what will become of you, depend on no one. Only the moment you reject all help are you freed.”

Q. The farmer had no worry and fear when events that seemed bad happened in his life. How did this make him free?

A. He put his energy into thoughts that would benefit him, not worries about what might happen.

Q. Buddha said he was ‘awake.’ What did he mean?

A. That he knew the path to peace was to release your desires, concentrate on your love of others, don’t harm anyone or anything and give with a generous heart.

Q. How do you feel compassion for yourself?

A. If you do something you think is wrong, forgive yourself.

Tween & Teen Activity

In today’s world, the media assigns a “Good” or “Bad” label to nearly everything that is communicated. However, some events in the world that were termed “Bad” led to a great outcome. Consider these as a group:

1. The Economic Downturn in 2008 led to more people saving and not purchasing homes they could not afford.
2. The exposure of VA Hospital corruption led to better medical care for our veterans.
3. What other events do you see in your life that are termed “Bad” but have a positive consequence?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #3: New Life - Easter & Spring

Springtime is a time of renewal - of making old things new again. Many religious traditions celebrate holidays about renewal at this time of year. One of the biggest spring celebrations is Easter. Easter comes from the Christian religion, and celebrates the renewal Jesus experienced himself and taught about. Jesus was a wise teacher who showed us that all of us can renew our lives all the time, which lets us grow more and more magnificent (or awesome!).

Week #1: Confidence in New Life

Week #2: Dedication to New Life

Week #3: Healing a New Life

Week #4: Integrity in New Life

(This lesson should be moved to coincide with Palm Sunday)

Week #5: Rise Up and Live

(This lesson should be moved to coincide with Easter)



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NEW LIFE - EASTER & SPRING

Week #1: Confidence in New Life

Main Message: During the spring, we see renewal in the plants, animals, trees, all around us. This renewal comes every year, without fail. Just as the world renews and grows, you can have confidence in your growth. You can have confidence in the growth you see in the world around you. This month we are going to focus on the Easter season and how renewal happens in every part of life. During spring we see renewal in the world around us: trees budding with new leaves, grass turning green again, seedlings (baby plants) poking out of the ground, birds laying eggs. The parable, or story, of the Seed Growing Secretly demonstrates that plants grow in an orderly process until they are full grown and can flower or make fruit. The same is true for Jesus' life and your life and my life. It's true for ALL life!

- A seed, or thought, planted in good soil will take root.
- The time for renewal and growth is always present.

Readings:

In the Christian Bible in the book of Mark [4:28], the writer talks about renewal by writing about how wheat grows.

"For the soil made the seeds grow. First a leaf-blade pushed through, and later the wheat-heads formed and finally the grain ripened."

In the Science of Mind textbook, the Law, which is like spiritual soil that we plant the seeds of our thoughts in, is just like the dirt a farmer uses. It doesn't pick what to grow - it grows the thing that is within the seed. It only says "YES" or "OK" to what we think and that is what grows in our life. When a gardener plants tomatoes, does corn grow instead? If you plant an apple tree, does it grow watermelons or apples? The same thing works here. If you think about happy things, you are planting a seed of happy - and more happy things will grow.

SOM 354-3¹: To repeat this in a clearer way, perhaps: Subjective Mind can deduce only; It has no power of initiative or self-choice, and is compelled by Its very nature to retain all the suggestions which It receives. The best illustration of this is in the creative soil, in which the gardener plants his seed. This soil does not argue nor deny, but goes to work on the seed and begins to create a plant which will represent the type of manifestation inherent, as idea, in the seed; from a cucumber seed, we get cucumbers, and from a cabbage seed we get cabbages.]

Lesson: The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly (Mark 4: 26-28)

(Mark 4: 26-28) A farmer sowed his field, and went away, and as the days went by, the seeds grew and grew without his help. For the soil made the seeds grow. First a leaf-blade pushed through, and later the wheat-heads formed and finally the grain ripened, and then the farmer came at once with his sickle and harvested it.

Parables are stories. Jesus told this parable to help us understand that we can be confident that the seeds will grow and the harvest will come. (Define "harvest" if needed.) In Jesus' story the farmer scatters seed on the ground, but then he goes about his normal life, doing his work, eating his meals, going to sleep and then getting up again the next day and doing it all again. The earth and the seeds automatically know what to do. They work together in an orderly process. If we plant corn and we wait, soon we'll see the little green blade appear from under

the dirt. Once it grows big enough, the ear starts to appear and after that full grains of corn grow in the ear. Then, when the process is complete, and the corn is ready, it is time to pick it. The harvest is at hand.

When the seeds are scattered, or planted in the ground, there are two things working at the same time: One is the world of those things we can already see or feel - the dirt, the rain, the sun and the part of the seed we can see. The second are the things we cannot see yet. Within each seed, is the form and everything needed to grow into the plant. The seed has the potential to be the plant. When the farmer plants the seeds, he is confident that the sun and rain and soil and seed will work together to generate - to create - the plant. And then at the harvest, his confidence in God's process working is rewarded. The fruits or vegetables or flowers can be enjoyed now.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What does a seed need to grow?

A1. Soil, sun and water. The seed will grow into its potential, the plant it can be, when put in the right environment.

Q2. Why did Jesus use a seed to explain a thought?

A2. A seed has potential (things it can be but hasn't grown into yet) and needs to be planted in soil that is good for it - soil that has vitamins and other things in it to help it grow strong. Our positive thoughts are seeds and, when planted into Universal Law (or receptive mind, which is Universal Mind that receives our thoughts), they create something that shows up in our lives. Thoughts of good health create good health. Thoughts of friendship create friendship.

Q3. Why did Jesus tell parables (stories)?

A3. Jesus used many things that people saw around them every day as examples to teach. His stories teach us how to use our minds and bodies so we can easily adjust our thoughts and the things we do in a way to live our best lives. Jesus told this story to explain the orderly, automatic process that happens when we create our thoughts.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Planting bean seeds is an activity that is appropriate for children of all ages. Kids can participate at different levels based on their age and skill level. Younger children will enjoy putting their hands in the dirt and watching the seedlings sprout and grow, while older children are able to understand how the sprouted seed is an expression of potential. Bean seeds are the best choice for children because they sprout quickly and easily, are simple to care for and are relatively inexpensive.

Craft: Planting Seed in Cup

Materials:

Soil
Beans
Water
Cup

Directions:

1. Fill the cup halfway with soil. Place 1 to 3 beans in soil. Tip: To speed germination, you can first soak the beans in water overnight.
2. Add more soil into the cup to cover the bean (this final layer should be about 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep). Water the soil well.
3. Leave the plant in a warm, sunny spot to sprout. Water as necessary to keep the soil about as wet as a damp sponge.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

The SOM Textbook¹ (quoted in reading above) goes on to tell us that the Universal Law allows the seed to be what it is as the plant grows. What this means to us is that we are all unique - different from each other in many ways while still connected because we are all made of the same "God-stuff." The Law does not make us be different than we are - it allows us to be more of who we are by allowing us to grow into what we have inside, just like a cucumber seed will always grow a cucumber and not a lemon. This is because the idea of the plant - the form for it - exists inside the seed, just like the idea for your life - the things you love to do and want to be - exist inside you. The full and perfect idea or pattern of everything exists within the seed of that thing or it could never grow.

There are spiritual Laws that work just like gravity does. And here the Law of Cause and Effect is at work. The potential for the seed or for us must be placed in the soil, or for us, into Universal Law as thoughts and feelings, for the thing to grow.

Activity: Look at different types of seeds and understand how only its true plant will emerge (flower seed, acorn, beans, etc.)

Discuss how the thoughts (seeds) the children plant in their awareness (soil) would grow.

Tween & Teen Activity

[SOM¹ , 354:3 continues this way:]

*Always the law maintains the individuality of the seed as it creates the plant; never does it contradict the right of the seed to be what it really is. Involved within the seed is the idea of the plant, as are also those lesser ideas which are to act as a medium between the seed and the plant. Involved within the seed are both cause and effect, but the seed must first be placed within the creative soil if we wish to see the plant. In the creative soil, (or in the seed) **the full and perfect idea of the plant must exist as a completed thing, or else it could never be brought into manifestation. The idea of the full-grown plant must exist somewhere in the seed and soil, if it is ever going to materialize.***

Discussion: Is it possible to grow a positive thing from a negative thought?

Just as it is not possible to grow an oak tree from a sunflower seed, it is not possible to create success in your life if you are thinking about how you can't be successful. If this is true, what does it mean about the importance of what you think about?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NEW LIFE - EASTER & SPRING

Week #2: Dedication to New Life

Main Message: Jesus taught us that to be able to really renew our lives we must be dedicated to God and understand that God is Love. Jesus showed this in many ways. He did things because in his heart he knew they were the right thing to do. We will see examples of this later this month when we talk about the choices he made and the things he did and said during what Christians call Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter). Jesus followed the feelings deep inside that helped him know what assistance he could give to other people and also what he needed to take good care of himself. He was kind and honest to his friends. He treated everyone like they were important, because they were. We are all made out of the same "God-stuff" and we are all the same inside. Jesus was dedicated to knowing God inside him and to knowing God was inside everyone else, too. Jesus didn't just tell his friends about his connection to God, he demonstrated this connection so his friends would discover their connection.

- We are all connected. What one of us does affects all of us.
- When we think and act as good as we can, it helps everyone.

Readings

In the Christian Bible, Matthew talks about Jesus' dedication to all people, including children. Jesus was sitting and teaching lots of people. Some people brought their children to the meeting, and took them up front so Jesus could bless them and pray for them. Some of the disciples got upset about this, maybe because they thought adults were more important than children. Jesus showed them by what he did and what he said that children are just as important as adults. He said, "Let the little children come to me" and he told all the people that God's gifts are for everyone. Then he put his hands on the children's heads and blessed them before he left.

Jesus had already told his friends and disciples, or students, that they should love each other like he had been showing them how to do. This helped remind them to love everyone. [John 13:34]

[FROM Matthew 19:13-15 (NIV 1984): 13 "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." 15 "When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there."]

[FROM John 13:34 (NIV 1984): 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."]

The Science of Mind textbook tells us that when we learn to love all people lots of people will love us back. This is because of the Law of Cause and Effect, the same Universal Law we talked about last week. When we love others we send out vibrations of love into the Universe and love comes back to us. When we love others they feel good and send love back to us. If we want friends, we must be kind and friendly to everyone, not just some people. And we notice and think about all the people who are kind and loving to us.

SOM: 2971: The one who has learned to love all people will find plenty of people who will return that love. This is not mere sentiment, and it is more than a religious attitude of mind. It is a deep, scientific fact, and one to which we should pay attention. The reason is this: As all is Mind, and as we attract to us what we first become, until we learn to love we are not sending out love vibrations and not until we send out those vibrations can we receive love in return.

Lesson: The Butterfly Flaps Its Wings

Everything we do affects other people, and things other people do affect us. There is an idea that when a butterfly flaps its tiny wings, the flapping creates tiny changes in the air that grow and grow and affect the weather on the other side of the world. It is not that the butterfly has the power to change the weather. It is that by flapping, the butterfly affects the air and that change can make other things change. Just like the butterfly flapping can affect the weather, the things we do or don't do affects other people. Even though we seem like we're all separate, we are really all connected. There is One Universal Mind, one God, and that same Mind, same God, is inside us all. Anything an adult or child does affects people they know and people they don't know.

Jesus showed his friends his dedication to each of them. He talked about and showed how important everyone was, adults and children. Jesus showed his love for other people no matter what they might have said or done. He wanted his friends and us to understand how to show love to everyone we meet.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. How did Jesus show his friends to always act from love?

A1. He treated everyone like they were important, and took time to talk and be kind to them, even when he was busy.

Q2. What does it mean that our actions speak louder than our words? Why is that true?

A2. What we do always makes a bigger impact than just talking about it. That means other people can feel what we do or say. When we do something kind or helpful, we have the "Butterfly Effect" on other people. We affect them in a positive or good way.

Q3. What can you do to help care for and be loving to other people in our world?

A3. Smile. Be kind. Listen to others. You can care for people you don't even know by helping take care of the earth. Some people don't have clean and fresh water to drink. We can be careful not to waste water so there is enough for everyone. Pick up litter. Put plastic and paper in recycle bins.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: We are interconnected and all part of the whole. These colorful hands will help your children identify with their classmates. Everyone will remember who belongs to their special circle.

Craft: Hands of Friendship

Materials::

Colored construction paper

Scissors

Markers or crayons

Directions:

Place children in groups to best match the size of your class. They can trace each other's hands on colored construction paper and cut them out to make the Hands of Friendship as shown in the photograph. Cut out four hands for each child so they each have one to bring home. The children can also print their names on the hands.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Marianne Williamson talks about the Butterfly Effect in her book, *The Age of Miracles*.

“When a butterfly flaps its wings near the tip of South America, it affects the wind patterns near the North Pole. And the same is true in the realm of consciousness: Every miracle you work in your life is a blessing on life itself.”

We are all part of One Life. We are all connected. The thing that is most important is that we are responsible for our own lives. How we behave in our own lives is the thing we can choose.

When we do our best and help others, we can change the level of kindness in our world. Everyone has something about them that is important for the world community. Together, when we let our brightest light shine, we change the possibility of what can happen on our planet.

Pay attention to what inside of you is wanting to emerge. Have fun discovering your greatest gifts and learning to live up to your full potential. Forgive others when they make mistakes. Understand that everyone makes mistakes when we work to discover our full potential. No one knows everything the minute they are born. Be willing to try new things and make mistakes. God has designed you to be able to discover the best YOU that you can be.

What gifts do each of us have that we can share with the world? (examples: I can sing, play an instrument. I am good at math, soccer, making friends. I always recycle. I am loyal. I am polite.)

Tween & Teen Activity

In the Bible, Luke 7:36-50, Jesus forgives a woman who had not made good choices in her life. This story illustrates four points:

1. Jesus loved everyone and treated them well.
2. He did not exclude anyone from this love.
3. He saw the truth of each person, that they were a child of God.
4. He wanted all of us to treat all people this way.
5. The word 'sin' in this context is not being aligned with your highest good. Just as in the Prodigal Son, when someone strays off the path, they are always able to come 'home.'

FORGIVENESS Luke 7:36-50

36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it."

41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47

Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to

whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”

48 Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

50 Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

(New King James Version)

In the Science of Mind textbook, Ernest Holmes echoes this sentiment of complete forgiveness and blessings to all we meet.

SOM 298-2¹: Think of the whole world as your friend, but you must also be the friend of the whole world. In this way, and with this simple practice, you will draw to you so many friends that the time will be too short to enjoy them all. Refuse to see the negative side of anyone. Refuse to let yourself misunderstand or be misunderstood. Know that everyone wants you to have the best. Affirm this wherever you go, and you will find things just as you wish them to be.

Discussion: Know that everyone around you wants you to have the best. How does this show up in your life?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NEW LIFE - EASTER & SPRING

Week #3: Healing a New Life

Main Message: All month we've been talking about how springtime is a time of renewal - of making old things new again. Many religions celebrate holidays about renewal in the spring. One of the biggest spring celebrations is Easter. Easter celebrates the renewal Jesus experienced. He showed us that we can renew our lives all the time, even when things feel hard or like they're falling apart. We are always growing in God inside.

Butterflies are good examples of renewal, of making things new again. Butterflies start out as caterpillars, and then they spin a special "house" called a cocoon, around themselves. While they're inside of that, it seems like they've died. Their bodies dissolve. But after a while, they grow a new body with beautiful wings, and when they come out of the cocoon, they can do things and see things they never could before. They can fly! They are totally renewed.

What appears to be bad, or negative might really be a great gift. Just like a caterpillar in a cocoon seems to be in trouble, there is something more happening that the caterpillar can't see. Even though it seems that the caterpillar is sick or broken or falling apart, it really isn't. It is

actually being built into a whole new self. In the middle of this confusing time it seems bad things are happening. But at the end the caterpillar will come out of the cocoon, completely healed as a beautiful butterfly.

- Just like the caterpillar, when you find yourself in a struggle, you can be sure that something much better will be waiting for you when the struggle part is over.
- You are always changing into something even more beautiful. You will know and be able to do things you didn't before.

Readings

The third chapter of the book of John in the Christian Bible tells us about one time that Jesus was teaching about being renewed, and about how sometimes things feel like they are falling apart when the truth is that they are being made brand new again. He said that it's like being born all over again, and when we are renewed like that, we know that God is working within us and as us. We know we are never alone and we are not broken. We are healed, we are whole and we are loved - and we always have been. [From John 3:3: Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."]

The Science of Mind textbook tells us that because we have God inside us, we are whole. Even if we feel afraid or like something is wrong, nothing has ever been wrong with or hurt our Spirit. Just because we are struggling doesn't mean something is wrong or that it will go on forever.

And when we remember that we are made of God-stuff and there is no way we can ever be separate from God, we feel happiness and joy in our hearts. We remember and we are healed and renewed, just like the butterfly. Experiencing the struggle only made us stronger.

SOM 163-2¹: Mental or Spiritual treatment should bring into actual manifestation the health and happiness which are mankind's normal and divine heritage. Such healing includes the emancipation of the mind from every form of bondage through a new concept of God, which causes the heart to beat with joy and gladness. This healing power is a consciousness of the Unity of all Life and the spiritual nature of all being. Man's life is rooted in the Universal and the Eternal, which life is none other than the Life of God. The healing process, in so far as it may be termed a process, is in becoming conscious of this eternal truth.

Lesson: The Story of the Butterfly

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly.
One day a small opening appeared.
He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours
as it struggled to squeeze its body through the tiny hole.
Then it stopped, as if it couldn't go further.
So the man decided to help the butterfly.
He took a pair of scissors and
snipped off the remaining bits of cocoon.
The butterfly emerged easily but
it had a swollen body and shriveled wings.
The man continued to watch it,
expecting that any minute the wings would enlarge
and expand enough to support the body,
Neither happened!
In fact the butterfly spent the rest of its life
crawling around.
It was never able to fly.
What the man in his kindness
and haste did not understand:
The restricting cocoon and the struggle
required by the butterfly to get through the opening
was a way of forcing the fluid from the body
into the wings so that it would be ready
for flight once that was achieved.
Sometimes struggles are exactly
what we need in our lives.
Going through life with no obstacles would cripple us.
We will not be as strong as we could have been
and we would never fly.



Questions and Answers:

:

Q1. Sometimes what appears to be 'bad' actually isn't. When in your life have you lost something that ended up making way for something new and better?

A1. Losing a baby tooth to make way for an adult tooth. Losing all the leaves off the trees allows them to go dormant (use less energy and need less water) and survive the winter. When a tadpole loses its tail, it is able to jump onto land as a frog.

Q2. Give examples of how nature is filled with miracles.

A2. Many animals go through big changes through their lives; so do plants, birds, bugs and fish. We don't know why everything happens in nature the way it does but we know that everything that happens is for the greatest good. Birds know to fly south to stay warm during the winter. Snakes shed their skins in order to grow. After hatching on the beach, baby sea turtles move directly to the ocean in order to survive. God is always changing, and since everything is made of "God-stuff," everything changes and grows!

Q3. In what ways do you change your thinking when you grow?

A3. We are always growing. Everything new we learn makes us understand things we didn't know before. You learned to walk. You learned to talk. You had to change how you thought about the world to take these big steps. In the future, you will learn to drive, move out of your parents' house and take care of your own families. We change and grow our whole lives.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Butterfly masks are a great way for children to get creative and then engage in some play with their new masks. Attach a chopstick (or other sturdy stick) to one side to create a masquerade-ball style mask.

Craft: Butterfly Mask

Materials:

1 butterfly mask template (at end of lesson)
Scissors
Colored pencils or markers
Glue
1 wooden chopstick
Masking tape
Optional extras: glitter glue, feathers, ribbons, anything you want!



Directions:

Print out the butterfly mask template on sturdy paper and cut it out. Draw shapes and patterns, color it in or decorate it with sequins, glitter glue, feathers or whatever you have. Attach the wooden chopstick to the blank side of the mask with the masking tape.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

We believe that we can participate in the healing process by actively directing our thoughts and lining up with what we call Spiritual Truth - the truth God knows that goes way beyond the situation we are in. One way we can do this is by learning Spiritual Mind Treatment, which is our form of affirmative, or positive, prayer.

This is a way we can focus our thought and energy on what we want in life. There are 5 steps to Spiritual Mind Treatment. [TEACHER NOTE: Review the steps and then let the kids practice. Emphasize that the main thing they should concentrate on during their prayer is not what they are saying, but how they are feeling. If they have a feeling that they KNOW all is well, and they KNOW all is good, they are tapped into the truth.]

Step 1: Recognition: God is all there is and God is all good.

Step 2: Unification: I am made of the same God-Stuff. I am a whole, perfect and complete child of God. There is no way God and I can be apart.

Step 3: Realization: I accept the good God has for me. I know God is at work in all areas of my life. All things are happening in perfect action.

Step 4: Thanksgiving: I give thanks that God is always with me, that I am loved and for everything in my life.

Step 5: Release: I let go and let God do the rest, just like the caterpillar lets God renew and heal the body into a beautiful butterfly. I believe and accept my good.

Tween & Teen Activity

Where have you struggled in your life? What struggles are you facing today?

Redefine the 'struggle' with a positive affirmation. Have the teen use this affirmation in the Realization step of the Spiritual Mind Treatment indicated above.

Examples:

- I am perfect health.
- Everything is always working out for me.
- God is Good.
- My perfect employment is available now.
- My family/friends/school/coach always support and love me.

Butterfly Mask Template





THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NEW LIFE - EASTER & SPRING

Week #4: Integrity in New Life

(This lesson should be moved to coincide with Palm Sunday)

Teacher Notes: Metaphysical Interpretations of Holy Week
From Charles Fillmore's Metaphysical Bible

- *Sunday: Jesus' return to Jerusalem means taking the last step in unfoldment preparatory of the final step when the personality is entirely crucified and the Christ triumphs. Jesus returned to Jerusalem, the place of peace, to begin his final week. It is here he is closest to God.*
- *Monday: Jesus taught the beauty of the body temple, our bodies, and that the living Spirit is present throughout our bodies. This was one of his main ministries. He knew that the merchants selling goods in the temple demonstrated their misunderstanding of what was important. Money was not to be worshipped, the focus should be on our oneness with Spirit.*
- *Tuesday/Wednesday: Many stories of Jesus' great works are in the Bible. He healed the*

blind and crippled. He said for a fig tree to wither and die. When his disciples asked why he did this, he told them the verse we use in the reading. Matthew 21:21-22.

- *Thursday: Jesus shared the Last Supper with his friends. They ate bread and drank wine. The bread represents the universal substance of Spirit. The wine represents blood which is the movement of life through the body. The friend who betrayed Jesus was named Judas. He represents humanity's preference to use underhanded methods in order to meet its obligations. To overcome our own Judas, we must assume a fearless attitude of mind.*
- *Friday: The word 'crucifixion' means the giving up of the whole personality. This is the release of all of our ego. When we release our ego, the only thing left is our Divine Spirit.*
- *Saturday: Mary Magdalene was one of the friends who mourned Jesus. She had previously been healed by Jesus. She represents the lifting up of power in consciousness, and letting this greatly increased faculty be guided by the emotions and desires of the human soul, the releasing of any thought, activities or habits that don't serve our greatest good. She personified the power of the good thoughts to dissolve negative thinking and move into our greatest good.*
- *Sunday: The word 'resurrection' means the raising of man's mind and body from the sense to spiritual consciousness. This rebirth is not for the soul alone. The whole person, spirit, soul and body, is lifted to conform to the absolute ideas of Divine Mind. With renewal, every function of the body works in Divine Order that every cell becomes incorruptible and pure.*

Main Message: This week is an important week in Christianity and to others who learn from Jesus. Christians call it Holy Week. This week we will follow Jesus from Palm Sunday through the Last Supper (the last Jewish Passover celebration dinner that Jesus participated in), Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Jesus knew that this week would change his life forever. He also knew that it was important to the whole world that he do what he knew he had to do and say what he had to say this week. Jesus showed integrity - being truthful, honest, and knowing he was part of the whole Universal Life - by keeping true to his heart and what he knew about God. He was afraid at times, like we all are, but he did not let fear stop him. He thought maybe he could get out of some things, but he

chose to go through everything in his week because he knew it was important for his renewal. He also knew his example would be important to the renewal of many, many people around the world. It still is today.

(Integrity means sticking to what you know is right, being whole and complete or being solid. [<http://dictionary.reference.com> [paraphrased]])

- Jesus experienced a lot of challenges the week before Easter.
- He stayed in integrity by listening to the guidance of the Divine, knowing he was himself whole and part of the greater Whole, and trusting that God is Good.

Readings

In the Christian Bible, Matthew said that Jesus told the people listening that if they really, really believed that God could do anything and that they had God inside of them and they did not doubt, they could even tell a mountain to move into the ocean and it would happen! He was teaching them that if you believe and plant thoughts of good things into the Universal Mind - that spiritual soil - and believe that they will grow and then let them grow, anything is possible.

[FROM Matthew 21: 21-22: Then Jesus told them, "Truly, if you have faith, and don't doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this Mount of Olives, 'Move over into the ocean,' and it will. You can get anything- anything you ask for in prayer- if you believe."]

The Science of Mind textbook tells us that God is the Knower that knows EVERYTHING. The Law can't say "no" - it only says "Yes!" - But it can only say 'yes' to what we know and believe. When we learn that God is everywhere all the time and that we can always talk to and hear God deep inside us, then we will be able to use this great Power to create the life we want to live. Just like Jesus did, and just like Jesus taught.

SOM 276-2¹: We must realize that the Universal Spirit is the supreme Knower in the Universe. The Law can only operate on that which is known. In such degree as our knowledge partakes of Its Original Knowledge, or Nature, it has power. The highest realization we can have is recognition of the Omnipresence of Spirit. This will set greater possibilities in motion and will, automatically, provide a better concept of life. Consequently, those people who have had the greatest sense of the Divine Presence -wherever it had been coupled with the definite knowledge of the Universal Law of Mind - have had the greatest power over that Law. This was the secret of the power of Jesus.]

Lesson: The Story of Holy Week

What Christianity calls Holy Week was full of many big things for Jesus and his friends and family. When these things happened, they didn't have these names. In fact, there wasn't a Christian religion then. Jesus and all his friends and family were Jewish.

- On Sunday: Jesus went back into the big city, Jerusalem, from the little town where he had been. He came into town riding on a small donkey. The people were so excited that he was coming back that they lined up along the street and cheered. It was like a parade. The people waved palms, branches from palm trees, to show their happiness. Some people laid their coats down like a carpet for him to walk on as a way to honor the great teacher they knew he was. Some people called out to him to heal them - and he did. Even when he was busy and being celebrated, Jesus took time to be kind, to help people, and to show love.
- The next day, on Monday: Jesus went to the temple to pray. The temple is the place that Jewish people go to pray and do special ceremonies, sort of like our church (or Center). When he got there he was sad and upset to see that there were a lot of people selling things and being loud and arguing with each other. They weren't praying to God or being kind or loving. He believed their behavior was inappropriate or wrong in such a holy place. He felt he had to tell them how wrong it was, and tell them to leave. So he did. This made some of the people in charge angry, but Jesus chose to do what he knew in his heart was right in order to be in integrity.
- On Tuesday & Wednesday: He continued to pray and to heal and to teach people who wanted to learn about the love of God. Many big crowds came to see him and to celebrate him. The people knew about the great things Jesus had done. But their being so happy Jesus was there just made the men in the government very angry.
- Thursday was Passover, an important holiday for the Jewish people, when they celebrate God saving their children. At night there was a big dinner as part of the Passover celebration. Jesus had his Passover dinner with his disciples (students) who were also his closest friends. This is now called "The Last Supper" because it was the last celebration dinner Jesus would have. He knew that someone at the table with him was being paid by some people who didn't like him to get him into trouble. He even knew who it was, but he still loved all of his friends all the time. He knew that even when we make mistakes we are all the same inside. Later after dinner Jesus went with his friends to a big garden. He wanted to pray by himself because he was feeling afraid, just

like we do sometimes. That one friend brought the soldiers there and they arrested Jesus.

- The Friday of Holy Week is now called “Good Friday” because it was the day that Jesus agreed to total renewal of his whole self. He proved that even though the body dies, our spirit and who we are lives always. Life goes on and on and on.
 - That Friday when Jesus was on the earth, people who didn't like Jesus and the things he was saying told the people in charge that he was lying and was not being a good person. Still Jesus said what he believed was true and trusted that God was with him even when it felt hard. Just like we know that God is always with us even when things feel difficult. We are never alone. Jesus was never alone and he knew that.
 - The soldiers and the government punished Jesus for things they thought he had done wrong. Jesus chose to be very brave and suffer their punishment. He knew that no matter what they did to his body, he would recover and that he would be completely renewed.
- On Saturday: People thought Jesus had died. He was put in a cave and his friends were very sad and missed him.
- On Sunday: Jesus walked out of the cave. The people who saw him said he looked the same but like his body was made from bright light. He looked happy and they knew he was whole. He was totally renewed. People knew that his renewal was a demonstration of the power he taught we all have within us to renew ourselves. This Sunday is called “Easter” and it is celebrated every year by Christians and people who follow the teaching of Jesus.
- So today is Palm Sunday. We celebrate that God lives within us and that we are all made of "God-stuff," just like Jesus was. Just like Jesus taught that we all are.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why did Jesus choose to go through all of the events of holy week?

A1. Jesus himself showed us that we all have power greater than ourselves that we can use. He did this by going through all the good and the hard things that happened that week. He again showed us how to love everyone around us, no matter what. He showed us to always know and believe that God is good and to stay true to that belief. That is how we stay in our integrity. And he showed us that at our pure essence, the truth is that we are one with God, with the Universal Spirit that is the Source of everything and everyone.

Q2. Why is Easter an important holiday to many churches?

A2. Many different churches celebrate Easter and the week leading up to it and they celebrate in many ways. No matter what part of the story they choose to talk most about, the whole week Jesus demonstrated the great lessons that God is always Good, Life goes on forever, and there is a power for Good in the Universe that we can learn to use.

Q3. What would it feel like to get anything you want if you ask for it in prayer?

A3. When you absolutely know something, like knowing the sun is going to rise in the morning, you can feel it in your body or your energy. When we pray, that's how we want to begin to feel. To know we really believe it. Then the Universe can say YES! to that and can bring what we want to us.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Palms to represent Palm Sunday

Craft: Palms

Purchase real Palm Leaves (try local floral shops – Google “Purchase Palm Fronds”) or make them out of green construction paper.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Holy Week is about Jesus' teaching. Through his life, he taught people that God is Good and that all of us are one with God. He taught us when we really, really know this truth and do not doubt it, we can move mountains.

Jesus had to suffer the events of Holy Week in order to show at the end that renewal is the only Truth for all of us. No matter what happens to us, no matter how difficult things seem, our inner essence - the God-part of us - is always whole and will always renew us. Jesus showed us this through his own life example. This is one of the most important things he came to teach.

Jesus showed integrity by staying present in the events of Holy Week even though he knew he would suffer. But as he himself told others when he came out of the cave, *the ongoing nature of life is the important part of the story*. The suffering was not the point.

Jesus' words after his resurrection were, "Why seek ye the living among the dead." Luke 24. His emergence into a greater life is the important part for all of us. Because as we read in our textbook, what is true for one must be true for all. It is Law.

Tween & Teen Activity

The Christian religions include many faith paths that remember and teach the story of Jesus. Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Non-Denominational Christians, Assemblies of God and many, many more are considered Christians. These religions believe that Jesus died on Good Friday because of the 'sins' of all people, and by dying, the rest of us on the planet can be 'saved' by believing in and following Jesus. Therefore many of the Christian churches emphasize the death of Jesus and his resurrection (rising from the dead) as the point of his whole life and teaching. You may have seen the image of Jesus hanging on a cross in a church, in a museum, or in a magazine or on a necklace or any number of other places. This shows how Jesus' body died on Good Friday. Back then, instead of putting people in jail when the police thought they had done something bad, they were "crucified," or nailed to a cross where they hung until they died.

We, like most Christians, believe that Jesus was an important teacher. But, we do not believe that people are born with sin. We do not believe that there is anything we can do that can separate us from God, because we are made from "God-stuff." We are completely God showing up as human beings. We do not believe Jesus was different than we are except that he walked closer with God than most of us have learned to do. We believe that Jesus came to show us that because he was also human, what he did, we can also do. We believe that Jesus came to teach us that everyone can renew their life at any time. Jesus renewed his life when he appeared on Easter morning. When he emerged from the tomb, the cave where his body had been taken, he was no longer fully human. He could be seen and felt but he was fully one with God and God is everywhere always, in and around each of us.

Discussion: Being in integrity means to do your duty for the benefit of society rather than the benefit of only yourself. We see integrity in heroic (going to war to protect your country) and smaller acts (not gossiping) every day.

What does integrity mean to you in your life?

What does it mean to you to follow Jesus' example of integrity?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NEW LIFE - EASTER & SPRING

Week #5: Rise Up and Live

(This lesson should be moved to coincide with Easter)

Teacher's Note: *Metaphysical Interpretations of Holy Week*
From Charles Fillmore's Metaphysical Bible)

Easter is about the renewal of the mind which results in complete transformation of the body. Our physical, emotional, and spiritual selves (and our body of affairs) are all transformed when we align with Universal Law. The resurrection, or complete renewal of our life, takes place here and now through the Spiritual Law of Cause and Effect.

Main Message: Today is Easter Sunday, a very important day for Christians. It is also an important day for others who learn from Jesus because it is the day when he showed everyone that we are Spirit (God) in form (as humans) and that the God part of us is very powerful. It lives forever. He also showed us that when we believe, really believe, everything can change. Things that seem dead can come back to life. Changing our thoughts changes our lives. Jesus demonstrated a renewal - old things being made new again in a new way - of his whole self. Throughout his life Jesus taught his friends and all the people that came to learn from him that God was love, God was in everyone, and that life doesn't ever end. On Easter morning he came out of the cave and visited his friends to show them he had a new body, a spiritual body of light. He showed them he had been renewed and taught that if we focus our minds on what is true and allow the power of God to work through us and as us, then anything can be made new!

There is no beginning to life, and there is no end. It's like a big circle. There is an unbreakable connection between the form (our bodies and our experiences) and the formless (our spirit). The formless never changes because it is God, and these two parts of us cannot be separated. But the *form* can always be made new again, or renewed. We'll use the analogy of the chicken and the egg to represent this eternal life.

- Jesus shows us that God is eternal and nothing can separate us from being one with God.
- Easter shows us that new beginnings are always possible.

Readings:

In the Christian Bible in chapter 5 of the book of John we read that Jesus said that people who hear and understand his teaching and believe that God is all there is will know their life goes on and on. They will know that God is always with them and loves them just the way they are.

[From John 5: 24 (NIV): "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."]

In the Science of Mind textbook (page 311) we learn that everything IS God, or Consciousness - the creative God-stuff showing up as many different people and countless different things. We learn that God creates by working within spiritual laws and that thoughts help shape things into form. Anything is possible when we learn how to use spiritual laws.

SOM 311:1¹: And when the disciples of Jesus asked him, "What is God's relationship to the dead?" he replied, "God is not a God of the dead but of the living, for in His sight all are alive." In other words, the Bible clearly states that we are living in a spiritual Universe, governed by mental laws; that there is an action of Consciousness, as Law, upon Substance, forever producing form, thus producing another; that the form changes but the Formless never.]

Lesson: The Chicken and the Egg

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

- People have asked this question for hundreds of years. Think about it: How can there be an egg if there was never a chicken to lay it?
- And how could there ever be a chicken if there wasn't an egg that chicken could grow in?

How could something be brought to form (like a chicken or an egg) from the Formless (from what looks like nothing)? It can only happen because God is everything and never changes - but the way God shows up can change all the time. There is no beginning and there is no end. It's because it's all God, and God always existed and always will. There is nothing that is not made out of God-stuff. It's sort of like a circle - in a whole, unbroken circle, there is no beginning. It all just IS. Just like Life.

Now, let's talk about how a chicken gets out of the egg. That process is called "hatching" and the chicken has to actively work at it. If the chicken stayed in its shell, it couldn't grow. Besides, once they get too big there isn't enough oxygen, or air, for them to stay in there. They have to get out. So how do they do it? The God-stuff inside of them tells them when it's time. They just know. So at a certain moment, almost by magic, baby chickens begin to move and break out of their egg.

You probably know that eggshells are fragile - they are not hard for people to break. But chicks have to work very hard to peck their way out. What makes it even harder is that their little eyes aren't open yet. But they have to do the work themselves, just like to learn to ride a scooter or a bike, you have to keep trying until you can do it yourself. Breaking out of their shells helps make their muscles strong so that they are healthy when they hatch. If you do it for them, you can actually hurt them. Sometimes things feel difficult, but it's important to know that it doesn't mean they're bad or that anything is wrong. Jesus had to do some hard things in the week before Easter, didn't he? We all sometimes do. But it's important to know you can keep trying because doing the difficult things you have to do yourself helps you renew. Just like Jesus showed us on Easter morning.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What do you think came first, the chicken or the egg? Why?

A1. Take a poll and see how the children respond. *[My two sons answered, "I think the egg appeared first because the chicken has to peck its way out." (Christopher Age 8) "I think the chicken appeared first because there is no way an egg can just appear on its own." (Jonathan Age 11)]*

Q2. Why is Easter Jesus' greatest teaching?

A2. Because he clearly showed us that we are both Spirit (God-stuff, which is Formless) and people (our body and personality, which are Form), and we are never alone because we are one with God, and we are always loved. He also showed us that our spirit, the God within us which never changes, can always renew our life, our body, our mind and our experiences. We can learn how to do this too.

Q3. Why does the chicken have to break out of its shell?

A3. In order to grow.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Eggs are a big part of many Easter celebrations and this craft enables children to create a polka dot cup Easter basket with eggs. The craft supports our story of the Chicken and the Egg, making it memorable and easily shared with parents, siblings, and friends.

Craft: Easter Egg Baskets

Materials:

Hole punch
Pipe cleaners (any color)
Paper shred or Easter grass
Polka dot or Easter theme paper cups
Colored gum balls or jelly beans

Directions:

Punch two holes in the paper cup, across from each other (this is for your handle).
Thread your pipe cleaner handle through the holes.

Twirl the ends of your pipe cleaner so the ends will not slide back through the holes.
Fill your cup with Easter grass or paper shred.
Top with gum balls or your favorite wrapped Easter candy.
Give to a friend!



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

In Buddhism, Hinduism and Native American faith traditions, there is the belief of the Wheel of Time. The Wheel of Time teaches that time is cyclical, which means it always goes around. Their idea of time causes them to give a different answer to the question of "what came first." Because time repeats over and over and over, their answer is that neither the egg nor the chicken is first because there is no "first" in a circle. There is no "first" in a cyclical view of time. This example can help us see what Dr. Ernest Holmes meant when he wrote that the 'Formless' (God, Consciousness, Spirit, Universal Mind - whatever you choose to call it) has always existed and always will. Everything is God in form; there is nothing else from which

anything could ever be made.

Let's take a look at the chicken breaking out of its egg. When it's time for a chicken to hatch, it's always because it has outgrown its egg. Somehow, it just knows there is more available than it is currently experiencing. The chicken is ready for a new life, just as Jesus stepped into a new life. He was resurrected - which means he came back to life- and completely renewed.

Tween & Teen Activity

We teach metaphysics, which literally means "beyond the physical properties of something." It also means the study of what is behind the physical things we experience. The metaphysical meaning of "resurrection" is "the raising of man's mind and body from sense (or feeling and touching to decide if things are real) to spiritual consciousness." It's about a change in our consciousness, a raising up of our consciousness, to allow us to see things in a spiritual way. These kinds of changes often happen after some kind of challenge or hard experience. The Easter story is a story of hope. It tell us we will overcome our difficulties and experience our soul being lifted up. It says we will transcend the difficulty, whatever it is, and we will grow as a result and we will know peace.

Humans have shells too. Although they are invisible, these shells are hard for us to break. We have to work at it, just as the chickens have to work at breaking out of their shells. Our shells are made from fear and indecision, from exaggerating our problems and underestimating our strength and resiliency. We try to keep things the same even though we know we can only grow through change.

Just because things are hard doesn't mean they are bad. Going through difficult things, when we remember that we are never alone because God is always with us, builds us up and causes us to grow. Change your thinking and you can change your life. In the Christian Bible in the book of Romans, one of Jesus' followers encourages the people he is teaching to "Be renewed by the transforming (or changing) of your mind."

It worked for Jesus - it will work for you!

Discussion: In what ways do you have a shell? How could you break out of it and renew?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #4: Ancient Hindu Stories

Hinduism is ripe with stories that have been told through the generations to teach the basic truth of our oneness with God and the search for God within each of us. This month, we use the stories of the celestial entities, or gods, from the ancient texts to teach these truths. Note: The term “gods” does not indicate that there are several gods that are worshipped by Hindus. They call the Supreme Being, Brahman, which is all reality and truth which we discover within ourselves.

Week #1: Saraswati: Divine Consciousness

Week #2: Ganesh: Teacher with the Elephant Head

Week #3: Vishnu and Lakshmi: Bringing Good Luck

Week #4: Shiva: God of Transformation



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

ANCIENT HINDU STORIES

Week #1: Saraswati: Divine Consciousness

Teacher's Notes: Hinduism has been called the oldest religion in the world. Many people in India are practicing Hindus and do their daily practice at home with their families. Hindus believe that the ultimate source of everything is Brahman which is Goodness, Truth and Mercy. Since people often find it impossible to understand a god with no form, the wise men (gurus) created a mythology with gods and goddesses to represent various aspects of the Supreme Spirit. These images are an aid to worship and not the objects of worship. Hindus worship only one God, but they do so through many different forms. For more information, visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism>

Main Message: Saraswati celebrates the free flow of Wisdom and Consciousness. In Hinduism, Saraswati represents intelligence, consciousness, cosmic knowledge, creativity, education, enlightenment, music, the arts, eloquence and power.

- Hinduism is practiced in the home with family.
- The knowledge of Oneness with the Divine is central to the Hindu practice.

Readings

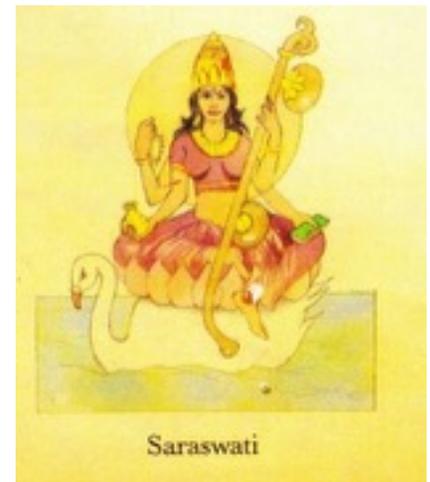
We open to love,
as water flows across rocks,
without resistance.

– Haiku Poem by Bonnie Best /bbest.com/haiku.html

SOM Reading: 331:3¹: In treatment there should always be a recognition of the absolute Unity of God and man: the Oneness, Inseparability, Indivisibility, and Changelessness... God as the big circle and man as the little circle. Man is in God and God is in man, just as a drop of water is in the ocean, while the ocean is the drop of water. This is the recognition which Jesus had when he said, “I and the Father are One.” There is a perfect Union, and to the degree that we are conscious of this Union, we incorporate this consciousness in our word; and our word has just as much power as we put into it, no more and no less.

Saraswati is the Hindu Goddess of Knowledge. The life path for every Hindu is to open to the awareness of our oneness with God. Saraswati is the wife of Brahma, the ultimate creator of everything. Saraswati is also called the River Goddess. In our story, *The Wisdom of the River*, we talk about how the flow of a river is in some ways similar to the flow of our lives.

Hindu Celebration: Saraswati Puja – celebrating the free flow of Wisdom and Consciousness. While Hindu families learn and practice their religion primarily in the family setting, during Saraswati Puja the temples and educational institutions celebrate together. Statues of Saraswati are dressed in yellow.



Most educational institutions arrange special prayers or pujas in the morning to seek the blessing of the Goddess. Poetic and musical gatherings are held.

Lesson: The Wisdom of the River

The flow of water in a river can be compared to the flow of our life. Like a river, life is constantly moving with new people, places and events. It has been said that 'the only constant is change' and we can always be certain that things in our life will change. When a river encounters a large rock sitting in its path, it adapts, just as when you encounter an obstacle, you must also make a choice. Like the river, you can go around it, over it or through it. Like our lives, the water of a river may at times run soft and peaceful and at other times furious. There may be so much water that it overflows its banks or a river may dry up because there is not enough rain. But, the constancy of the river and flowing water over time is the true picture of the river, not a snapshot of a river, or a life, at any given moment. With time, water can carve deep into rock or through rock. With time, a river will always return to its source. With time, a life of wisdom is spent flowing in, around and through the obstacles of life and always returning to its source.

Questions and Answers for Hindus:

Q1. What am I?

A1. In your inner self you are part of Brahman/God.

Q2. What is my life?

A2. A search to find Brahman/God in yourself.

Q3. How can I know Brahman?

A3. By knowing yourself.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Saraswati is strongly associated with flowing water in her role as a goddess of knowledge. She is depicted as a beautiful woman to embody the concept of knowledge as supremely alluring. She possesses four arms, and is usually shown wearing a spotless white sari and seated on a white lotus or riding a white swan.



Craft: Paper Plate Swan

Materials:

White paper plate
White feathers
Orange paper
Markers
Scissors

Directions:

Cut the paper plate to form the swan's neck.
Cut and glue on the beak and feathers.
Draw on the eye.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Be Like the Water Flowing Around the Rocks

How could you be more like a river?

The Frederick Lenz Foundation (www.fredericklenzfoundation.org) states that "Water always seeks the easiest path, the common level of life. When it reaches a spot where there is a blockage, water finds the easiest path around the blockage. Or, if it can't find a way around the blockage, it continues to assemble. The water gets deeper and deeper until finally the level

increases and it flows over the blockage. It uses itself to go beyond whatever it needs to go beyond.”

Discuss how qualities of water are reflected in qualities in your life. (examples: Strength, Surrender, Persistence, Consistency, Flexibility, etc.)

Tween & Teen Activity

Write a Haiku about Water and Life

A Haiku is a poem with a rhythm. 5-7-5

The first line is 5 syllables, the second 7 and the third 5 again.

Examples of famous Haikus

Shiki, Masaoka (1867-1902).

The summer river:
although there's a bridge, my horse
goes through the water.

Raizan

You rice-field maidens!
The only things not muddy
Are the songs you sing.

Basho, Matsuo (1644-1694)

Temple bells die out.
The fragrant blossoms remain.
A perfect evening!



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

ANCIENT HINDU STORIES

Week #2: Ganesh: Teacher with the Elephant Head

Teacher's Notes: The stories of Ganesh are varied and inconsistent over the centuries. But, Ganesh consistently represents overcoming obstacles. Ganesh is the son of the Gods Shiva and Parvati. The myths say his head was cut off by Shiva and replaced with an elephant's head. K.N. Somayaji says, "There can hardly be a [Hindu] home [in India] which does not house an idol of Ganapati. Ganapati, being the most popular deity in India, is worshipped by almost all castes and in all parts of the country." Devotees believe that if Ganesh is propitiated, he grants success, prosperity and protection against adversity. Devotees sometimes interpret his elephant head as indicating intelligence, discriminative power, fidelity, or other attributes thought to be had by elephants. The large elephant ears are said to denote wisdom and the ability to listen to people who seek help. The rat Ganesh rides (or has at his feet) symbolizes selfishness which Ganesh overcomes.

For more information, visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganesh>

Main Message: Ganesh is the most popular statue in India. The Hindus have many stories about Ganesh that are shared with their families. Over the centuries, some of the stories have varied. Ganesh is always shown with an elephant's head and one tusk. Ganesh is often shown riding with a rat or with a rat as his feet. These symbolize wisdom and overcoming adversity. Each Hindu home has a statue of Ganesh as he represents success and removal of adversity.

- Gifts given with humility and love are the most fulfilling.
- Overcoming adversity is available to all of us.

Readings

“Do not worry in the least about yourself, leave all worry to God,’ - this appears to be the commandment in all religions.

This need not frighten anyone. He who devotes himself to service with a clear conscience, will day by day grasp the necessity for it in greater measure, and will continually grow richer in faith. The path of service can hardly be trodden by one who is not prepared to renounce self-interest, and to recognize the conditions of his birth. Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only for our own happiness but that of the world at large.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

SOM Reading: 147:21: Do we desire to live in a world peopled with friends who love us, surrounded by things beautiful and pleasing? There is but one way, and this way is as certain as that the sun shines. Daily we must control all thought that denies the real; affirm the divine presence within us; then, as the mist disappears before the sun, so shall adversity melt before the shining radiance of our exalted thought!

Lesson: From Ganesh: Removing the Obstacles

by James H. Bae

Shiva had been gone from his consort, Parvati, for a long time. Parvati is lonely and fashions a son out of the mud, Ganesh. Parvati is taking a bath, while Ganesh guards her. Ganesh does not recognize Shiva and will not let him in. Shiva loses his patience and cuts off the boy's head, later to realize that this was the son or creation of Parvati. When Shiva realizes his mistake, he sends his attendants to search for a spare head which is facing north. They find an elephant head, which Shiva places on the boy's shoulders and restores him to life again as Ganesh. Ganesh means the elephant-headed one.

Skanda was also the son of Shiva and Parvati. Skanda once challenged Ganesh to a race. Who could circle the universe first? Skanda appeared more fit and rode on a peacock. He took off. Ganesh could not compete in this way. His mount, the mouse, could not beat a peacock. Ganesh became silent and prayed. Then he slowly circled his parents, Shiva and Parvati. Then he bowed his head in gratitude and reverence. Ganesh stated that his parents were the center of the universe. Pleased by his devotion, Shiva and Parvati declared him the winner of the race.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What is adversity?

A1. Challenges that come up in all of our lives.

Q2. Why is Ganesh usually with a rat?

A2. The rat symbolizes selfishness that we each need to overcome.

Q3. Hindus promote selfless action. What does this mean?

A3. To have your actions reflect kindness.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: An elephant to represent Ganesh

Craft: Paper Elephant Courtesy of Egor Shumilov

Materials:

Colored paper (3 sheets per elephant)

Glue

Scissors

Google eyes

Stapler

Directions:

Glue and stapler most effective.

Divide sheet one into 4 equal rectangles for legs.

Using sheet two – cut 1 X 11 inch strip and cut in half for trunk and tail. Cut remaining 7 ½ X 11 inch piece into two for body and head.

With sheet three – cut two large circles for ears.

Roll 4 pieces of paper for legs and staple together.

Glue paper to legs and loop around to form elephant's body.

Loop smaller paper for head and glue on trunk and eyes.

Cut out and glue on ears and tail.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Ganesh, the God of Good Beginnings. Below is a slide show from Sompong Yusoontorn that shares the 12 Life Lessons taught by Lord Ganesh.

<http://www.slideshare.net/bright9977/12-life-lessons-from-lord-ganesh>

The 12 Life Lessons taught by Ganesh

Lesson # 1: Successful persons must destroy selfishness & pride

Lesson # 2: Always see the goings in the world with a microscopic sight

Lesson # 3: Sustain high morale & reputation

Lesson # 4: Keep our ears as big as “Surpa”

Lesson # 5: Think before speaking out about the others

Lesson # 6: Have feelings of love, affection and well-being for the others

Lesson # 7: Act in good faith

Lesson # 8: Depend on yourself

Lesson # 9: Every obstacle can be overcome

Lesson # 10: Do not go into the realm of dark imaginings

Lesson # 11: Modesty

Lesson # 12: Seek knowledge

Tween & Teen Activity

A Guru is a master or teacher in India. The deities we are studying this month are used to teach life lessons to Hindu families. But, any person can become a Guru through union with Brahman/God. This union is attained when these 6 goals are met.

- 1) Sensuous, aesthetic pleasure
- 2) Participation in economic activity and public welfare
- 3) Do what is ethical and moral
- 4) Aspire to high goals
- 5) Become one with Brahman
- 6) Practice AHIMSA (non-violence) to persons and insects

One of India's great leaders was Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi famously said, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

Activity: Break into small groups and discuss how we can overcome obstacles in our lives and in our world while maintaining the 6 goals for union with Brahman.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

ANCIENT HINDU STORIES

Week #3: Vishnu and Lakshmi: Bringing Good Luck

Teacher's Notes: Lakshmi and Vishnu are two Hindu gods representing wealth and creation. The lotus is an ancient symbol in Indian culture. Hindus revere it with the gods Vishnu, Brahma and the goddesses Lakshmi and Sarasvati. Vishnu is often described as the Lotus-Eyed One. The lotus springs from the navel of Vishnu whilst he is in Yoga Nidra. The lotus' unfolding petals suggest the expansion of the soul. The growth of its pure beauty from the mud of its origin holds a benign spiritual promise. Particularly Brahma and Lakshmi, the divinities of potency and wealth, have the lotus symbol associated with them. In Hindu sacred texts, Vishnu is usually described as having the divine blue color of water-filled clouds and as having four arms. He is depicted as holding a padma (lotus flower) in the lower left hand, a unique type of mace used in warfare known as a Kaumodaki gada in the lower right hand, a Panchajanya shankha (conch) in the upper left hand and a discus weapon Sudarshana Chakra in the upper right hand. Vishnu is also described in the Bhagavad Gita as having a 'Universal Form' or Vishvarupa which is beyond the ordinary limits of human perception or imagination. For more information, visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishnu>

Main Message: The Hindu mythology continues with the marriage of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. Both provide us with protection and channels for enhancing our lives. Vishnu is the protector of all mankind and represents creation. Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth. They are both connected with the lotus flower. The lotus represents our awakening to the spiritual reality of life. Vishnu and Lakshmi statues are present in homes and businesses and bring good luck and abundance.

- We create the luck in our lives.
- As we give thanks for what we have, we open the door to receive more.

Readings:

One who performs his duty without attachment, surrendering the results unto the Supreme Lord, is unaffected by sinful action, as the lotus is untouched by water. —Bhagavad Gita 5.10

SOM Reading: 463:4¹: Man seeks to league himself with material forces alone, not realizing that there can be nothing outside the Unity. Most of us seek the cause in the effect and unknowingly put the cart before the horse, not realizing that the flower is already in the seed, and that effects must follow causes. There can be no true alliance apart from life and no good apart from a unity with the whole.

Lesson: The Lotus Flower

The lotus flower is a pure white flower and the only plant to fruit and flower simultaneously. It emerges from the lowest point of the muddy swamp, growing from the mud at the bottom of ponds and streams. The superb lotus flower rises above the water and is usually white or pink with 15 or more oval, spreading petals, and a peculiar, flat seedcase at its center. Its unfolding petals suggest the expansion of the soul. The lotus flower is the symbol of purity, because of its ability to emerge from the murky waters in the morning and be perfectly clean.

The start of this flower's life is not as beautiful as one might imagine. When the lotus first begins to sprout, it is under water surrounded by mud and muck and insects. But the flower grows toward the light past the dirty water by creating a strong, sturdy stem and a small flower

pod. The stem strengthens and grows nearer and nearer to the water's surface until it breaks through into the clean air above. Then, after it has succeeded in moving past the filth, a magnificent flower bud bursts from the pod. It slowly opens, one petal at a time, to the sunshine. When the sun sets, it closes its petals back into a bud until the next morning's sun. The flower is often compared to a person who lives through obstacles in their life only to emerge with a stronger base and as a beautiful being opening to the light. Words associated with the lotus flower are beauty, strength, perseverance, pleasure and spiritual enlightenment. This is why many of the Hindu Gods are sitting on or holding the Lotus flower.

The lotus flower also symbolizes eternal love, such as the love between Vishnu and Lakshmi. The long strong stalks of the lotus are near impossible to break because they are made of strong interlocking fibers.

The story and symbolism of the lotus flower show us that light always wins over darkness, good fortune is always finding its way to us, and our good luck comes from the work we do when we persevere through the dark times.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What does it mean that we create our own good luck?

A1. Our hard work for a noble cause brings forth good rewards.

Q2. Why is the lotus flower admired for its beauty?

A2. It is hard to believe from such dirty beginnings, the great beauty springs forth. We are grateful.

Q3. How can we bring the lotus flower into our lives?

A3. If we are going through a tough time, we can remember it is making us stronger in our root and our faith strengthens our knowledge of our oneness with God.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Flowers – symbolizing the Lotus flower and unfoldment to enlightenment

Craft: Tissue paper flowers (There are lots of varieties of how to make this craft. Below are the basic, simple instructions.)

Materials:

Brightly colored tissue paper
Wire (twist-ties) to secure
Long wire to form stem
Stapler

Directions:

To make simple flowers, layer several colors of tissue paper and fold in accordion. Wrap pipe cleaner around center and spread out layers of tissue paper.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

What sometimes appears to be a lucky break is many times the result of years of hard work and determination. Vishnu is the God of Creation and Lakshmi is the Goddess of Wealth.

Discuss these quotes from well-known people and what they believe about 'luck.'

Shallow men believe in luck. Strong men believe in cause and effect.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Diligence is the mother of good luck.
Benjamin Franklin

It's hard to tell with these Internet startups if they're really interested in building companies or if they're just interested in the money. I can tell you, though, if they don't really want to build a company, they won't luck into it. That's because it's so hard that if you don't have a passion, you'll give up.
Steve Jobs

I feel that luck is preparation meeting opportunity.
Oprah Winfrey

I've found that luck is quite predictable. If you want more luck, take more chances. Be more active. Show up more often.
Brian Tracy

Activity: Create Paper Tissue flowers and 'plant' them around campus (see Craft Week #3)

Tween & Teen Activity

Here are two readings about the spiritual significance of the Lotus flower. As a group, read through them:

Robert Lawlor, a symbologist while living in Puducherry in 1991 states:

The lotus in both Egypt and India symbolizes the union of the four elements; earth, air, fire, and water. The roots are in the earth, it grows in and by means of water, its leaves are nourished by air, and it blooms through the power of the sun's fire. The lotus is therefore the perfection of the fourfold order of the natural world. The growth of a new flower directly from the earth-bound original (inflorescent proliferation) may be interpreted as a symbol of transcendence as found in Indian philosophy: a spiritual emergence of a higher world directly from our physical manifestation.

“The lotus is the most beautiful flower, whose petals open one by one. But it will only grow in the mud. In order to grow and gain wisdom, first you must have the mud — the obstacles of life and its suffering. The mud speaks of the common ground that humans share, no matter what our stations in life. Whether we have it all or we have nothing, we are all faced with the same obstacles: sadness, loss, illness, dying and death. If we are to strive as human beings to gain more wisdom, more kindness and more compassion, we must have the intention to grow as a lotus and open each petal one by one.”

-Goldie Hawn

Activity: As a group, list as many words as you can to describe the Lotus Flower. Review the list and discuss, how many of these are also an important quality in life?

Alternate Activity: Lotus Flowers around your church grounds
Have the teens make several brightly colored tissue paper flowers (see directions under crafts for week #3)



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

ANCIENT HINDU STORIES

Week #4: Shiva: God of Transformation

Teacher's Notes: The search for knowledge in all forms leads to transformation and enlightenment. Taking care of our bodies, the vehicles given to us for this life, is an important part of the Hindu traditions and practice.

Main Message: Shiva represents fortune, goodness, favor and promise. Hindus practice rituals symbolizing spiritual knowledge, purity and penance (the spiritual practice of Yoga). Yoga is integral to the Hindu way of life and promotes self-contemplation, good physical health and good mental health. Shiva is sometimes called the Auspicious One. He is the god of fortune, goodness, favor and promise.

- Self-discovery begins with search of knowledge.
- Yoga is a self-discipline based upon self-contemplation, good physical health and good mental health.

Readings:

“Only two kinds of people can attain self-knowledge: those who are not encumbered at all with learning, that is to say, whose minds are not over-crowded with thoughts borrowed from others; and those who, after studying all the scriptures and sciences, have come to realize that they know nothing.”

— Ramakrishna, Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna

SOM Reading: 99:2-3¹: Body is always an effect, never a cause. Body expresses intelligence; its apparent intelligence being lent by the consciousness which permeates it. We would not say that consciousness is in the body, but rather that the body is in consciousness! If one is unconscious he has neither pain nor fear. Pain and fear are in consciousness, but consciousness so completely envelops the body that it appears to be intelligent. Perhaps the human body is an exact counterpart of an invisible body which is non-material as we now understand matter and physical form. The physical body is evolved for the purpose of allowing consciousness to function on this plane. The body is necessary to this plane, since only through a physical body can we properly function here.

Lesson: Practice the Yoga Moves for Young Children: The Leaf, The Flower, The Cricket, The Owl and The Bird

1. The Leaf



1. The Leaf; beginning position with straight spine and then with gently rounded spine.

Sit with spine straight, soles of feet together, hands on ankles.

Gently round spine and then return to sitting straight.

Repeat several times.

Sit with spine straight, soles of feet together, hands on ankles.

Gently round spine and then return to sitting straight.

Repeat several times.

2. The Flower



2. The Flower; make little bounces with knees toward floor.

Sit with spine straight, soles of feet together, hands on ankles.

Gently bounce knees toward floor 10 to 20 times.

3. The Cricket



3. The Cricket: head leaning.

Sit with spine straight, soles of feet together,
or sit cross-legged, hands on ankles.

Head and eyes look forward, then up, then forward.

Next, lean right ear to right shoulder.

Straighten head and lean left ear to left shoulder, then straighten head.

Repeat several times.

4. The Owl



4. The Owl: head turning.

Sit cross-legged, hands at sides, palms on floor.

Turn head to look to one side over shoulder,
then over the other shoulder.

If sitting on a firm enough surface,

spin body around once using hands to help propel spin.

Repeat several times.

5. The Bird



5. The Bird; hands clasped behind back, looking up, shoulder blades pulled together.

Sit with spine straight, soles of feet together.
Clasp hands behind lower back
and pull shoulder blades together slowly,
head tilted back, eyes looking up.
Hold, then release, relaxing shoulders, back, body.
Head bent forward.
Repeat several times.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. How can Yoga help our bodies?

A1. It keeps our bodies strong and limber.

Q2. How can Yoga help our minds?

A2. We concentrate on the movements and our breathing, we have an uncluttered mind and are closer to God.

Q3. Why is self-discipline important

A3. When we work on and improve in any practice, including Yoga, we feel better about ourselves.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Harmony

Craft: Have your children receive a small stone or other element to help them remember to stay grounded. If appropriate, go outside your center to find rocks, flowers or or sticks.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Hindus practice Yoga as a form of self-discipline for self-contemplation and good physical and mental health. Your body is the vehicle that carries you through this life.

Shiva is the goddess of promise. Each of you has much to give to this planet. Why is it important to walk through your life with a healthy body?

Tween & Teen Activity

Hindus use Yoga as a self-discipline based on self-contemplation and good physical and mental health. Vinyasa yoga is a form that uses the body and breath to flow through fluid motions.

Today, teens will practice Yoga and the connection of Divine Wisdom being in each of you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PgIfOOHwH8>





THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #5: The Philosophers

This month we are studying philosophers from different religions, countries and faiths who have all had an impact on humanity's thinking. Even though they lived many years apart, in different parts of the world, they each shared the knowledge of the importance of love and wisdom. Confucius' focus on self-improvement was radical for his day. Aristotle was revered by Muslim intellectuals and profoundly influenced Judeo-Islamic philosophical and theological thought during the Middle Ages and continues to influence Christian theology, especially the scholastic tradition of the Catholic Church. al-Farabi was a leader in the Islamic Golden Age and taught how we all must work together. King Solomon taught that the best decisions are made with our heart, not our head.

Week #1: Confucius - Self-Improvement

Week #2: Aristotle - The First Teacher

Week #3: Al-Farabi - The Second Master

Week #4: Solomon - The King of Israel



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE PHILOSOPHERS

Week #1: Confucius - Self-Improvement

Main Message: Confucius was the most important person in the history of Chinese philosophy. He was born in 551 BC in China and strove to bring order and justice to his country. His focus was on how men should be educated to live and work with others in society. Confucius' teachings focused around a primary thread through all wisdom: "Do not impose upon others what you do not want for yourself." Confucius believed we are all good but can move away from our innate goodness. Our job is to find our way back to that peace and harmony within ourselves. Once we have harmony and peace within ourselves, we can establish peace and harmony in the world. Confucius' focus on self-improvement was radical for his day. He wanted to lead others to a peaceful society that was grounded from a place where all people lived in peace.

- We should continually focus on improving ourselves.
- Educating ourselves to be the best we can be will last a lifetime.

Readings

“Wisdom, compassion, and courage are the three universally recognized moral qualities of men.” ~Confucius

SOM 423:2¹: But the practice of Truth is personal to each, and in the long run no one can live our life for us. To each is given what he needs and the gifts of heaven come alike to all. How we shall use these gifts is all that matters! To hold one’s thought steadfastly to the constructive, to that which endures, and to the Truth, may not be easy in a rapidly changing world, but to the one who makes the attempt much is guaranteed.

Lessons from Confucius: The Story of Three Men Walking

Three men were walking along the road. It was unremarkable. Men walk together along the road all over the world. The interesting fact of these three men was not where they were going, or how they knew each other, it was how they interacted.

The first man was completely focused on being his best self. He walked with purpose, breathing deeply and enjoying the sun warming his body. He shared what he had with others he met along the way.

The second man was worried and concerned about matters at his home and work. While he walked, he was concentrating on thinking about his problems and so did not see the problems of others. He heard only the worried thoughts in his head and did not see the landscape or anything else around him. Even though he was with the other two men, he walked by himself.

The third man observed how the men walking beside him were acting. He decided the joy and compassion the first man exhibited was beneficial to himself and others and adopted this posture for himself. He noticed how the worry of the second man kept him from being present to anything else occurring in the world. He decided to release his own worry until he could return home.

As Confucius said: “If I am walking with two other men, each of them will serve as my teacher. I will pick out the good points of the one and imitate them, and the bad points of the other and correct them in myself.”

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What did Confucius mean by “each man beside me will serve as my teacher?”

A1. It is not up to us to judge other people but to take for our own self-improvement that which we observe.

Q2. Why would we not want to impose our judgment on others?

A2. Because we would not want their judgment imposed on us.

Q3. How can you use this trick to help in your own self-improvement?

A3. Observe others not to judge them but to determine what would or wouldn't work for me.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: As we walk through life, we make choices about the best path to take for each of us. This week we create a maze to symbolize our choices.

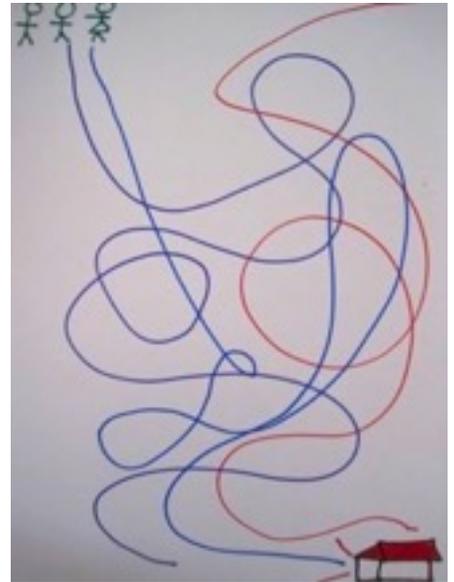
Craft: Create a Maze

Materials:

Paper
Markers

Directions:

Mazes can be done with all sorts of material. You can create a giant maze to walk through at your center or simply have the children create a maze using markers.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Confucius could be called the original self-help guru. Many of his sayings are echoed in the world today by the likes of Tony Robbins and Oprah Winfrey. Confucius taught that the way we live our lives will determine how at peace we are. Two of his primary themes were knowing what is best for each of us and not being afraid to step into the unknown.

1. Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.
~Confucius
2. Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall. ~
Confucius

Take these quotes from Confucius and discuss what they might mean for each of you.

Tween & Teen Activity

An onion is often used as a metaphor for the journey to self-understanding. If you have ever cut into an onion, you notice that it has many layers that can each be peeled off separately. So, peeling the layers of an onion allows us to start from the whole, and as we peel away each layer, we discover that the 'whole' is again underneath.

Give each of the teens an onion. Go around the room and have them each pull off a layer. As they do, have them state something about themselves that they can remove because it is not serving their highest good.

Examples:

I release my anger at my sister/brother.

I release my need to be the smartest in my grade.

I release my fear about getting into the right college.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE PHILOSOPHERS

Week #2: Aristotle - The First Teacher

Teacher's Notes: Aristotle was born in Greece in 384 BC. He has had tremendous influence on Christian, Judeo and Arabic scholars. He was influential in many areas but we will be focusing on his contribution to metaphysics. In his work on metaphysics, Aristotle attempted to define the causes for existence of each thing that could be observed. He defined several sets of causes, and further explored the physical make-up of the universe as being a mix of several forms. All objects, he argued, were made of matter, which is their potential, and their form, the actual state of being. For example, the matter — be it bronze or marble or some other material — is formed by a sculptor, based on his idea, into a final form: a statue.

For more information, visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle>

Main Message: Aristotle was one of the most influential people who ever lived. Aristotle believed all people's concepts and all of their knowledge was ultimately based on perception. In metaphysics, Aristotelianism profoundly influenced Judeo-Islamic philosophical and theological thought during the Middle Ages and continues to influence Christian theology, especially the scholastic tradition of the Catholic Church. Aristotle was well known among medieval Muslim intellectuals and revered as "The First Teacher." Aristotle showed us that the potential for each of us can be envisioned from whatever our form or circumstance is current today. It is our perception of that possibility that has the greatest influence on the outcome.

- We can create any life we want.
- Our perception of events changes with each new experience.

Readings:

"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." ~Aristotle

SOM 137:2¹: It has taken humanity thousands of years to learn that it has the power to control its own destiny. From the Bible we have the assurance: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The old Greek philosophers understood something of the meaning of thought. What we expect, said Aristotle, that we find. What we wish, said Demosthenes, that we believe. And Shakespeare is accredited with the saying: "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." It is one thing to know a principle, another to apply it.

Lesson: The Influence of the Unseen

In Aristotle's time, most people agreed there were four components that impacted how we lived our lives.

Earth – the solid soil used to create life

Water – the liquid all living plants and animals need to survive

Air – the gas that cycles through our bodies and our plants

Fire – the heat that keeps us safe and warm

Aristotle introduced that there was a 5th component to our existence that he called Aether, an unseen divine substance that takes care of the balance within and outside of our bodies.

Think about all that aether does:

- Directs the planets for harmony
- Creates the weather for purification
- Orchestrates life through rejuvenation
- Directs our body's heart, brain and systems for life
- Directs the instinct of all animals for life
-

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why did Aristotle introduce a 5th element?

A1. Because the nature of life cannot be explained by earth, water, air and fire alone.

Q2. Why is the 5th element considered metaphysical?

A2. Because it is our perception of these systems that defines their impact on our lives.

Q3. How does the 5th element impact you?

A3. A3. This unseen force is behind creation.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Create wheel indicating the 5 elements: Earth, water, air, fire and Spirit.

Craft: The Five Elements:

Materials:

Paper plates

Markers

Tissue paper

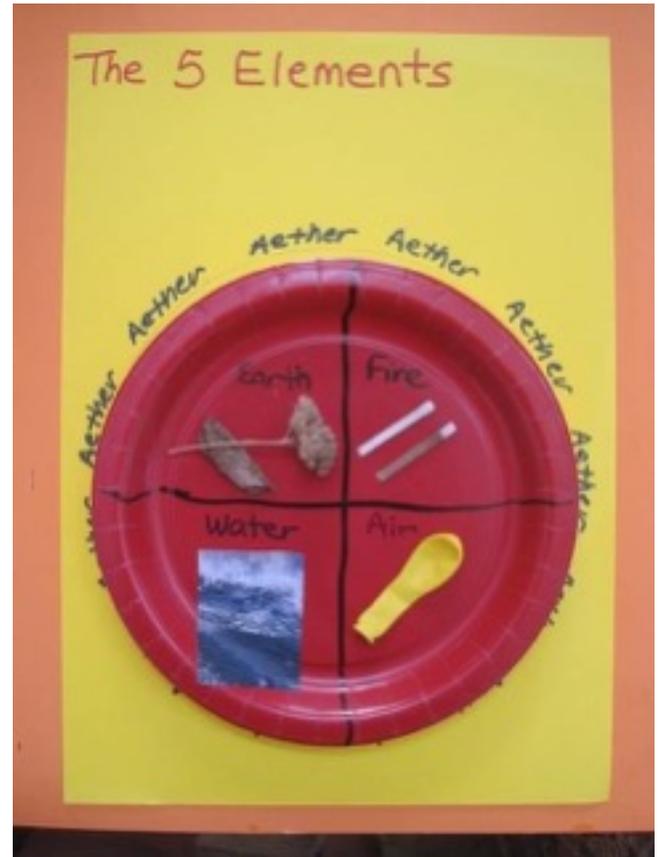
Natural materials/cutouts/balloon/ fire

Directions:

Around the outside of the plate, repeat the word Aether, the divine substance that flows in and through all things.

Divide the plate into four sections to define the four other elements.

Glue tissue paper or natural materials in each section of the plate to signify earth, fire, water and air. Or, use color and words to do the same (as shown here).



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Aristotle showed that our perception of a circumstance impacts the circumstance.

Aristotle said, “All human actions have one or more of these seven causes: chance, nature, compulsions, habit, reason, passion, desire.”

Talk about these situations and discuss which causes are at play. What situations are occurring in your life? Which of these causes is impacting it?

- The sun rises in the east.
- A turtle returns to its original place of birth to nest.
- You select a career to pursue.
- You witness a car accident.
- A 14th placed college basketball team beats the #1 team in the country.

Tween & Teen Activity

Artists throughout the ages have created beauty from seemingly nothing. Marble and chisel can create a statue. Paint and canvas can create a masterpiece. Concrete and machines create architecture. The common thread is that the creator of this art envisions the potential from the raw material.

The same can be said for each of us. Throughout our lives we are creating events and circumstances from our raw materials.

Activity: Select a time into the future (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, 25 years) and envision what you want your life to look like. What are you doing each day? Who is with you? What brings you joy?

Cut pictures out of magazines or use markers to make a Vision Board.

You are the creator of your life.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE PHILOSOPHERS

Week #3: Al-Farabi - The Second Master

Teacher's Notes: Al-Farabi was an Islamic philosopher who believed a healthy society could be compared to a healthy body where all of the (important) individual parts work together for the greater good. He concluded that to "achieve what he can of that perfection, every man needs to stay in the neighborhood of others and associate with them." This idea of working together is outlined in his work "The Virtuous City" when he realized very few societies could ever attain this goal. He divided those "vicious" societies, which have fallen short of the ideal "virtuous" society, into three categories: ignorant, wicked and errant. Ignorant societies have, for whatever reason, failed to comprehend the purpose of human existence, and have supplanted the pursuit of happiness for another (inferior) goal, whether this be wealth, sensual gratification or power. It is interesting to note that democratic societies also fall into this category, as they too lack any guiding principle. Both wicked and errant societies have understood the true human end, but they have failed to follow it. The former because they have willfully abandoned it, and the latter because their leaders have deceived and misguided them. Al-Farabi also made mention of "weeds" in the virtuous society; those people who try to undermine its progress toward the true human end.

For more information, visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Farabi>

Main Message: Al-Farabi was born around 872 AD and was a philosopher and scientist. He was renowned during the Islamic Golden Age when 'the ink of a scholar was more holy than the blood of a martyr.' He studied with Christian and other philosophers of the time. He loved music and poetry. His greatest work was "The Virtuous City." Al-Farabi was known to the Arabs as the 'Second Master' (after Aristotle). He may rightly be acclaimed as one of the greatest of Islamic philosophers of all time. Al-Farabi taught that working with one another, with each of us in alignment with our greatest good, was the focus for happiness. Working within your community and neighborhood, sharing your gifts and appreciating and enabling the gifts of others, will make the best life for everyone.

- The people around us are our most important focus.
- Sharing our gifts and talent with our neighbors will bring us the greatest satisfaction.

Readings:

"An isolated individual could not achieve all the perfections by himself, without the aid of other individuals." ~Al-Farabi

SOM 431:4¹: We are told that God will forgive us after we have forgiven others. This is a direct statement and one that we should ponder deeply. Can God forgive until we have forgiven? If God can work for us only by working through us, then this statement of Jesus stands true, and is really a statement of the law of cause and effect. We cannot afford to hold personal animosities or enmities against the world or individual members of society. All such thoughts are outside the law and cannot be taken into heavenly consciousness. Love alone can beget love. People do not gather roses from thistles.

Science of Mind Textbook (SOM), by Ernest Holmes (page, paragraph)

Lesson: The Boy and the Wolf (an Aesop Fable)

A boy who was employed to tend sheep was often bored with the task. One day, to create a little excitement, he rushed toward the village crying, "Wolf! Wolf!" When the villagers came with clubs and pitch-forks to help him, they found nothing. This seemed like such a good sport that a few days later the boy cried out again, and once more the people ran to help him.

One day a wolf actually did come out of the forest. But this time when the boy cried, “Wolf! Wolf!” the villagers thought he was playing his tricks again, and refused to stir. Meanwhile the sheep were at the mercy of the wolf, who enjoyed a hearty meal.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. How does the story show it is best for neighbors to all work together to help each other?

A1. Treat your neighbor with respect so they will treat you with respect.

Q2. What did the boy think of his job?

A2. He did not realize how important his job was and, by being bored, didn’t take it seriously until it was too late.

Q3. What can you do to help your neighbors?

A3. Treat them the way you would want to be treated.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Each of our body parts work together to make our bodies strong. Just as with our societies and neighborhoods where all people work together.

Craft: Brad Paper Dolls

Materials:

Paper
Scissors
Brads
Markers

Directions:

Cut out the paper doll’s parts. Attach the arms and legs using brads. You can write a word on each of the limbs to signify ways we all work together. (compassion, cooperation, forgiveness, love, etc.)



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Al-Farabi compares the philosopher's role in relation to society with a physician in relation to the body; the body's health is affected by the "balance of its humours" just as the city is determined by the moral habits of its people. The philosopher's duty, he says, is to establish a "virtuous" society by healing the souls of the people, establishing justice and guiding them toward "true happiness."

Talk about the people in your neighborhood. What roles do people play? How do people help each other? Why do people spend their time and energy getting involved in helping their neighborhood?

Tween & Teen Activity

Al-Farabi was also a student of dreams. In his essay, On the Cause of Dreams, he talks about the interpretation of dreams.

Many of us have similar dreams and their meaning can be interpreted to understand the meaning to our lives.

Discuss these common dreams. Which have you had and what could they mean in your life? (courtesy of Jamie Frater)

Lost or Trapped

Dreaming about being lost is very common and will usually occur when you are having conflict in deciding how to react in a situation in real life. In the dream you are trying to find your way out of an area – such as a forest, city streets, a large building, or other maze-like structures. Another way this dream plays out involves you being trapped, buried alive, caught in a web, or unable to move for some other reason. This is often accompanied by a feeling of terror. This dream usually means that you are trapped in real life – unable to make the right choice.

Missed a Boat or Plane

In this type of dream you are rushing to catch a bus, train, plane, or other type of public transport – but you miss it – usually by a fraction of a second. Rather than feeling fear in this

dream, you usually feel frustration. This dream can also occur in a different form, in which you arrive late for an important performance or sporting event that you are supposed to participate in, only to find that the event has already begun. This dream usually means that you feel you have missed out on an important opportunity in your real life. It will often occur when you are struggling over an important decision.

Being Chased

Dreaming of being chased can be a truly horrifying experience. Most often the chaser is a monster or some person that is frightening, and occasionally it may be an animal. You may be surprised to know that this is the most commonly experienced nightmare theme. The meaning of these dreams is that someone, or something (possibly something as obscure as an emotion) is making you feel threatened. One way to determine the root of the threat is to ask yourself who or what in your real life most closely resembles the “creature” or circumstance in your dream. It is also worth noting that sometimes this dream is a replay of an actual event in your life.

Falling or Sinking

We have all had falling dreams. It is such a common dream, in fact, that myths have arisen over them; the most common myth is, of course, that you will die if you hit the ground in the dream. I can assure you, having hit the ground in more than one falling dream, that this is not true at all. In the falling dream we are usually falling through the air and frightened. Occasionally we may be sinking in water (and in danger of drowning). Typically a person having this dream is feeling insecure or lacking in support in their waking life. These dreams often occur when you are overwhelmed in life and feel ready to give up. If you have this dream you should evaluate your current situation and try to locate the problem that is overwhelming you. Deal with it and this dream should go away.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE PHILOSOPHERS

Week #4: Solomon - The King of Israel

Teacher's Notes: Solomon's wisdom is extensively documented through the books of the Old Testament in Christianity, Judaism and Islamic writings. We cannot cover all the legends and accounts of events in his life but will focus on a few stories that demonstrate his wisdom. According to the Book of Kings, the Book of Chronicles, Hidden Words and the Quran, Solomon was a king of Israel and the son of David.

To learn more visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon>

Main Message: Solomon was King of Israel and stories of his wisdom are present in the Bible, the Torah and the Quran. He was born around 970 BC and the Hebrew Bible credits Solomon as the builder of the First Temple in Jerusalem and portrays him as great in wisdom, wealth, and power. Solomon was known for the truths and insights he revealed through his acts. His power came not from bullying or force but from understanding that true wisdom comes not from the head but from the heart.

- We can continually learn new wisdom about ourselves and our planet.
- Search for wisdom as though it is a hidden treasure.

Readings:

Proverbs 1:7-9: How does a man become wise? The first step is to trust the Lord. Only fools refuse to be taught. Listen to your father and mother. What you learn from them will stand you in good stead; it will gain you many honors.

SOM 238:4¹: Solomon is accredited with many words of wisdom, none of which are more appropriate than his admonition, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23)

Lesson: The Judgment of Solomon (Adapted from 1 Kings 3:16-28)

Who did the child belong to? One morning within a home, two women were shocked to find only one baby where previously there had been two. Both women had recently given birth and both claimed the baby to be theirs. The baby was quite young and could not speak or gesture. A quarrel ensued between the two women both claiming the baby as their own.

The villagers did not know what to do and brought the women and the baby to King Solomon who was known for his wise counsel. King Solomon asked, “To whom does this baby belong?” The first woman replied, “Lord, he is mine. I carried him for 9 months and gave birth to him only recently. He is my entire world and I do not know if I could go on living without him.” The second woman replied, “Oh no, Lord, the child is mine. I prayed for a child for many years, and God has granted me my deepest heart’s desire, this child.”

King Solomon looked at both women and then made his decision. "Since you have both proven to me that you are the mother of this child, I cannot ask you to give up something that is so dear to you. So, we will take the only fair route. We will take a large blade and cut the baby in half so you may each have your child."

The first woman replied, "All right, it will be neither her's nor mine; divide it between us!" But the second woman replied, "Oh, no, sir! Give her the child! Don't kill him!" Then the king said, "Give the baby to the woman who wants him to live, for she is the mother!" Word of the king's decision spread quickly throughout the entire nation, and all the people were awed as they realized the great wisdom God had given him.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why was King Solomon wise?

A1. Because he did not argue with the women but found a solution to their problem.

Q2. King Solomon did not intend to kill the baby, what did he intend to do?

A2. He knew the mother who truly loved her child would rather see him live than die.

Q3. How does this apply in your life?

A3. It is better to give up something you love than to see it destroyed.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: The crown is a symbol for King Solomon and his wisdom. This simple project can be worn by the children after it's been created. Use different colors appropriate for the theme or the child's preferences.

Craft: Crown

Materials:

Cardboard or construction paper

Scissors

Paint, crayons, or markers

Glitter, stickers

Stapler



Directions:

Cut a strip of cardboard or paper 5 or 6 inches wide and long enough to go around your head and overlap slightly.

Cut a zigzag in the top edge of the cardboard or paper.

Decorate the crown using markers, paint, crayons, glitter and stickers.

Make a ring with the cardboard facing in (toward the head) and the paper facing out and staple to make a crown. Adult assistance required for this step.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Solomon said: “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23)

We interpret this teaching as knowing that keeping our heart pure through thoughts, deeds and actions will keep our life pure as well.

[Prov. 1: 1-6] These are the proverbs of King Solomon of Israel, David’s son.

He wrote them to teach his people how to live - how to act in every circumstance, for he wanted them to be understanding, just and fair in everything they did. “I want to make the simple-minded wise!” he said. “I want to warn young men about some problems they will face. I want those already wise to become the wiser and become leaders exploring the depths of meaning in these nuggets of truth.”

[Prov 1:10-18] If young toughs tell you, “Come and join us” – turn your back on them. “We’ll hide and rob and kill,” they say. “Good or bad, we’ll treat them all alike. And the loot we’ll get! All kinds of stuff! Come on, throw in your lot with us; we’ll split with you in equal shares.”

Solomon said: “Don’t do it, son! Stay far from men like that for crime is their way of life and murder is their specialty. When a bird sees a trap being set, it stays away, but not these men; they trap themselves! They lay a booby trap for their own lives.”

[Prov 3:21-26] Have two goals: wisdom - that is, knowing and doing right - and common sense. Don’t let them slip away, for they fill you with living energy, and are a feather in your cap. They keep you safe from defeat and disaster and from stumbling off the trail. With them on guard you can sleep without fear; you need not be afraid of disaster or the plots of wicked men, for

the Lord is with you; he protects you.”

Question: How do these words from 2000 years ago apply to us today?

Tween & Teen Activity

Proverbs is a "collection of collections" relating to a pattern of life which lasted for more than a millennium. It is an example of the Biblical wisdom tradition, and raises questions of values, moral behavior, the meaning of human life, and right conduct.

Activity: Write proverbs on slips of paper and put them in a container. Have the teens select a proverb. Proverbs can be short, well-known phrases that offer advice or state a general truth about life. (When the going gets tough, the tough get going, or When life gives you lemons, make lemonade, etc.) Or, the Proverbs may be selected from the book in the Bible, chapters 10 through 30. If Bibles are available, have the teens read through these chapters and share 2 or 3 that have meaning to them.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #6: Native American Lore

This month we will study our Unity and Oneness with our world and each other through the traditions of Native Americans. Native Americans teach the Great Spirit created our world and everything in it. We will explore this Wisdom and what it means for us as an integral part of our planet. We consider the Harmony of the world and our place in it. We teach Respect for all we see. Wisdom to make the best choices we can to support our world. And Compassion for the challenges we see for our world and others.

Week #1: Our World's Harmony

Week #2: Respecting Our World

Week #3: The Wisdom of Our World

Week #4: Compassion for Our World



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NATIVE AMERICAN LORE

Week #1: Our World's Harmony

Main Message: We see evidence of harmony all around us. The indigenous people understand the harmony of our planet and our place in it. They revere the earth and all living creatures and show great respect for everything. They understand that the smallest among us has mighty powers and purpose.

- Everything on the planet works together in harmony.
- We can use ritual to acknowledge this harmony.

Readings

“..... everything on the earth has a purpose; every disease an herb to cure it, and every person a mission. This is the Indian theory of existence.” – Mourning Dove Salish

SOM 42:5¹ – Spiritual wisdom says that God manifests through everything and is incarnated in all men; that all is divinity and that Nature herself is the body of God. The mechanical laws of nature are set and immutable, but the spontaneous recognition of these laws gives us the power to bring them into practical use in everyday life and experience.

Lesson: Native American Ritual

Native Americans Believe-

- Mother Earth takes care of all her children, animals and the earth.
- Great Spirit is in everything and is the Father.
- All of nature is sacred and holy and should be treated with respect.
- We are all one. “Mitakuye Oyasin”

“The Great Spirit is in all things, he is in the air we breathe. The Great Spirit is our Father, but the Earth is our Mother. She nourishes us; that which we put into the ground she returns to us...”

As a group, do the Four Directions Ceremony. (For Teens & Tweens, use the longer version with candles indicated below)

Four Directions Ceremony: Calling in the Directions

Have the group stand and participate in the ritual as you read the sheet or perform from memory. To begin the creation of your circle, invite all participants to stand with their arms raised and palms out.

Face East

Leader: “Welcome. We are open to your inspiration today. Let this new day dawn in us with new and unlimited possibilities. Give us wisdom and insight.”

All turn to face South

Leader: “Welcome, South. May the bright energy of the sun illumine all that we do today. May we be surprised; may we laugh. Let your fire ignite our spirits.”

All turn to face West

Leader: “Welcome, West. May we regularly explore our mind and soul, not so much for answers as for questions. Let your way of intuitive certainty move in us for good today.”

All turn to face North

Leader: “Welcome, North. May we be strong in body for what we are on this earth to do. Let it be that we do our work for those dear ones who will one day call us their ancestors.”

All bend down to touch the earth.

Leader: “Welcome, Mother Earth. Let us feel our connection with you today. May our bodies of your clay find a comfortable home on you, and may your ways of flow, conservation, economy, support and creation live in our work.”

All place their hands over their hearts.

Leader: “We welcome the Great Within. May this inner universe that contains all we could ever need, be with us today. Let all that we are individually and collectively come forward and serve our work. Welcome to all that we are; welcome to the Great Within.”

Leader: “The sacred space has been established.”

Adapted from the book, “Real Life Rituals,” by Rev. Karyl Huntley

Questions and Answers:

Q1. During the ceremony we acknowledged the sun and the earth. Why is this important?

A1. The Native Americans acknowledge and bless many parts of our planet. We should not take our planet for granted. It shows our respect for this place we call home.

Q2. Who are our ancestors and why do we acknowledge them?

A2. Our ancestors are the people who were on the planet before us. They did many things that made the world a better place for us today.

Q3. We will be ancestors of the people who come after us. What do we need to do for them?

A3. We need to make sure we take care of their home for them. Our children’s children.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: We bless the Sun and all the power, light and energy it brings to the world.

Craft: Paper Sun

Materials:

5 sheets of yellow construction paper

Scissors

Markers/crayons

Glue or tape

Directions:

1. Accordion fold a piece of yellow construction paper. Fold in half. Glue (or tape) the end folds together where they meet in the middle.
2. Repeat with three more pieces of construction paper.
3. Arrange the four fans together to make a complete circle gluing or taping the pieces where they meet.
4. Print the face on yellow paper. Cut out. Glue in the middle of your fan circle.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

As a group, do the Four Directions Ceremony.

You will need four candles: Yellow, Red, Black and White.

Four Directions Ceremony: Calling in the Directions

Have the group stand and participate in the ritual as you read the sheet or perform from memory. To begin the creation of your circle, invite all participants of the ritual to stand facing the East with their arms raised, palms out.

The yellow candle is lit as the leader of the ritual begins

Leader: “Welcome, East. We are open to your inspiration today. Give us your new ideas, new beginnings, new breath in our speaking. Let our view of today’s endeavors be long, and let our seeing be expansive. Let this new day dawn in us with new and unlimited possibilities. Give us wisdom and insight for our work. Welcome, East.”

Everyone turns to face the South while a red candle is lit.

Leader: “Welcome, South. May your heat live in our hearts as passion for our work together. May we feel the transformative power of your fire so that we are changed forever. May the bright energy of the sun illumine all that we do today. May we be surprised; may we laugh. Let your fire ignite our spirits. Welcome, South.”

Everyone turns to the West while a black candle is lit.

Leader: “Welcome, West. We are familiar with your watery ways because we are watery beings. Let our feelings have a place in today’s work. May we regularly explore our mind and soul, not so much for answers as for questions. Let your way of intuitive certainty move in us for good today. Welcome, West.”

Everyone turns to the North while a white candle is lit.

Leader: “Welcome, North, the direction of the ancestors. May the wisdom of our relatives who have gone before influence our work today. May we be strong in body for what we are on this earth to do. Let it be that we do our work for those dear ones who will one day call us their ancestors. Welcome, North.”

All look upward

Leader: “Welcome, all the nations above. May the wisdom of the stars, planets, weather, and the wisdom of the beings that inhabit the sky be with us today. Let all your blessings fall on us and our work. May our ideas take flight as your energy enlivens us. Welcome, Above.”

All bend down to touch the earth.

Leader: “Welcome, Mother Earth. Let us feel our connection with you today. May our bodies of your clay find a comfortable home on you, and may your ways of flow, conservation, economy, support and creation live in our work. Bless us, Mother Earth, and welcome.”

All place their hands over their hearts.

Leader: “We welcome the Great Within. May this inner universe that contains all we could ever need, be with us today. Let all that we are individually and collectively come forward and serve our work. Welcome to all that we are; welcome to the Great Within.”

Leader: “The sacred space has been established.”

After the directions are called, the participants should feel prepared, divinely supported, full in the knowledge that the newly formed circle is a holy place in which powerful accomplishments are possible.

Taken from the book, “Real Life Rituals,” by Rev. Karyl Huntley

Tween & Teen Activity

"With your feet I walk, I walk with your limbs, I carry forth your body. For me your mind thinks, your voice speaks for me, beauty is before me, and beauty is behind me. Above and below me hovers the beautiful; I am surrounded by it. In my youth I am aware of it, and in old age I shall walk quietly, the beautiful trail."—Navajo Prayer.

This beautiful Navajo Prayer speaks to both the harmony of our place with the Mother Earth but also the recognition of Father Spirit being within each of us.

Activity: Speak the prayer aloud as a group. Take each sentence of the prayer and discuss what it means to you.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NATIVE AMERICAN LORE

Week #2: Respecting Our World

Main Message: Respect for our plants, animals and each other show respect for Spirit. Out of the Native American approach to life there came a great freedom, an intense and absorbing respect for life, enriching faith in a Supreme Power, and principles of truth, honesty, generosity, equity and brotherhood. Native Americans teach that all of nature is sacred and holy and should be treated with respect. Mother Earth takes care of all her children, animals and our universe. Great Spirit is in everything. Having respect for our world means giving thanks for all things.

- Respect means being grateful for the gifts of the earth.
- Respect begins with respect for self.

Readings:

"Treat the earth well; it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." ~ Ancient Indian Proverb

SOM 25:3¹ – We see abundance in the Universe. We cannot count the grains of sand on a single beach. The earth contains untold riches, and the very air is vibrant with power. Science of Mind Textbook (SOM), by Ernest Holmes (page, paragraph)

Lesson: An Indian Prayer by H. Kent Craig

My grandfather is the fire
My grandmother is the wind
The Earth is my mother
The Great Spirit is my father.

Hail the fire, my grandfather
for the light, the warmth, the comfort he
brings
without which we be animals, not men.

The World stopped at my birth
and laid itself at my feet.

Hail my parents and grandparents
without which
not I

And I shall swallow the Earth whole
when I die
and the Earth and I will be one.

nor you
nor anyone else
could have existed.

Hail The Great Spirit, my father;
without him no one could exist
because there would be no will to live.

Life gives life
which gives unto itself
a promise of new life.

Hail The Earth, my mother
without which no food could be grown
and so cause the will to live to starve.

Hail the Great Spirit, The Earth, the wind, the
fire;
praise my parents loudly
for they are your parents, too.

Hail the wind, my grandmother
for she brings loving, life-giving rain
nourishing us as she nourishes our crops.

Oh, Great Spirit, giver of my life
please accept this humble offering of prayer
this offering of praise
this honest reverence of my love for you.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. How do the Native Americans demonstrate their respect for the planet?

A1. They use everything they take from the earth. They do not take the earth for granted.

Q2. How do they honor all animals and plants?

A2. When a life has to be taken from an animal or plant, it is done with gratitude for what is being given to us (nourishment, shelter) and respect for the animal or plant we are using.

Q3. What does the Indian Prayer teach us about respect?

A3. All parts of the earth, the wind, the rain, all work together to provide us with what we need to grow.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Flowers are a beautiful part of this planet. We are reminded to appreciate their beauty and form with gratitude for all that is beautiful in our world.

Craft: Cupcake Flowers

Materials:

Mini cupcake papers in multi colors

Glue

Green paper

Straws or popsicle sticks

Beads or buttons

Instructions:

1. Paint the popsicle sticks if desired.
2. Glue buttons or beads to the center of the cupcake liner.
3. Cut out and glue green leaves to the popsicle sticks.
4. Glue the cupcake liner to the stick.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

There are many examples of how Native Americans respect the land where we live. Below are quotes for you to discuss with your class. What was the person trying to say with each quote? What do you think?

"When we Indians kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots, we make little holes. When we build houses, we make little holes. When we burn grass for grasshoppers, we don't ruin things. We shake down acorns and pine nuts. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the white people plow up the ground, pull down the trees, kill everything... How can the spirit of the earth like the White man? Everywhere the White man has touched it, it is sore." ~ Wintu Woman, 19th Century

"Traditional people of Indian nations have interpreted the two roads that face the light-skinned race as the road to technology and the road to spirituality. We feel that the road to technology has led modern society to a damaged and seared earth. Could it be that the road to technology represents a rush to destruction, and that the road to spirituality represents the slower path that the traditional native people have traveled and are now seeking again? The earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass is still growing there." ~ William Commanda, Mamiwinini, Canada, 1991

"We must protect the forests for our children, grandchildren and children yet to be born. We must protect the forests for those who can't speak for themselves such as the birds, animals, fish and trees." ~ Qwatsinas (Hereditary Chief Edward Moody), Nuxalk Nation

Tween & Teen Activity

“Out of the Indian approach to life there came a great freedom, an intense and absorbing respect for life, enriching faith in a Supreme Power, and principles of truth, honesty, generosity, equality and brotherhood as a guide to mundane relations.

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nest in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours.

Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.” ~ Black Elk(Oglala 1863-1950)

Discussion: Native American Traditions see everything as a circle - guided by an unseen power. How is this the same or different as traditional views of God?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NATIVE AMERICAN LORE

Week #3: The Wisdom of Our World

Main Message: Native Americans know that everything on this earth has a purpose and everything is important. This is true for each of us as well. Everything in our world, big and small, is important.

- Understanding the importance of even the smallest creature.
- Everything has a purpose.

Readings:

When you are in doubt, be still and wait;

When doubt no longer exists for you, then go forward with courage.

So long as mists envelop you, be still;

Be still until the sunlight pours through and dispels the mists - as it surely will.

Then act with courage.

~ Ponca Chief White Eagle (1800's to 1914)

The Universal Mind contains all knowledge. It is the potential ultimate of all things. To It, all things are possible. To us, as much is possible as we can conceive according to law. Should all the wisdom of the universe be poured over us, we should yet receive only that which we are ready to understand. This is why some draw one type of knowledge and some another. And all from the same source – the Source of all knowledge.

Lesson: *How the Fly Saved the River ... A Native American Lore*

Many, many years ago when the world was new, there was a beautiful river. Fish in great numbers lived in this river, and its water was so pure and sweet that all the animals came there to drink.

A giant moose heard about the river and he too came there to drink. But he was so big, and he drank so much, that soon the water began to sink lower and lower.

The beavers were worried. The water around their lodges was disappearing. Soon their homes would be destroyed.

The muskrats were worried, too. What would they do if the water vanished? How could they live?

The fish were very worried. The other animals could live on land if the water dried up, but they couldn't.

All the animals tried to think of a way to drive the moose from the river, but he was so big that

they were too afraid to try. Even the bear was afraid of him.

At last the fly said he would try to drive the moose away. All the animals laughed and jeered. How could a tiny fly frighten a giant moose? The fly said nothing, but that day, as soon as the moose appeared, he went into action.

He landed on the moose's foreleg and bit sharply. The moose stamped his foot harder, and each time he stamped, the ground sank and the water rushed in to fill it up. Then the fly jumped about all over the moose, biting and biting and biting until the moose was in a frenzy. He dashed madly about the banks of the river, shaking his head, stamping his feet, snorting and blowing, but he couldn't get rid of that pesky fly. At last the moose fled from the river, and didn't come back.

The fly was very proud of his achievement, and boasted to the other animals, "Even the small can fight the strong if they use their brains to think."

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why were all the animals afraid of the moose?

A1. Because he was large and intimidating.

Q2. Why did the animals laugh at the fly?

A2. They did not think such a small insect could do anything to scare away the moose.

Q3. Did the fly act from courage, wisdom or folly?

A3. The fly knew he could do something that the moose would find very irritating and that would drive him away. I think the fly thought of a creative solution.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft:

We are creating something that will fly!
Think of the birds in the air, the dandelion seeds floating and the fly who drove off the Moose.

Craft: Whirly Bird Helicopter

Material:

3X8 1/4-inch brightly colored cardstock
Decorative stickers/markers
Scissors

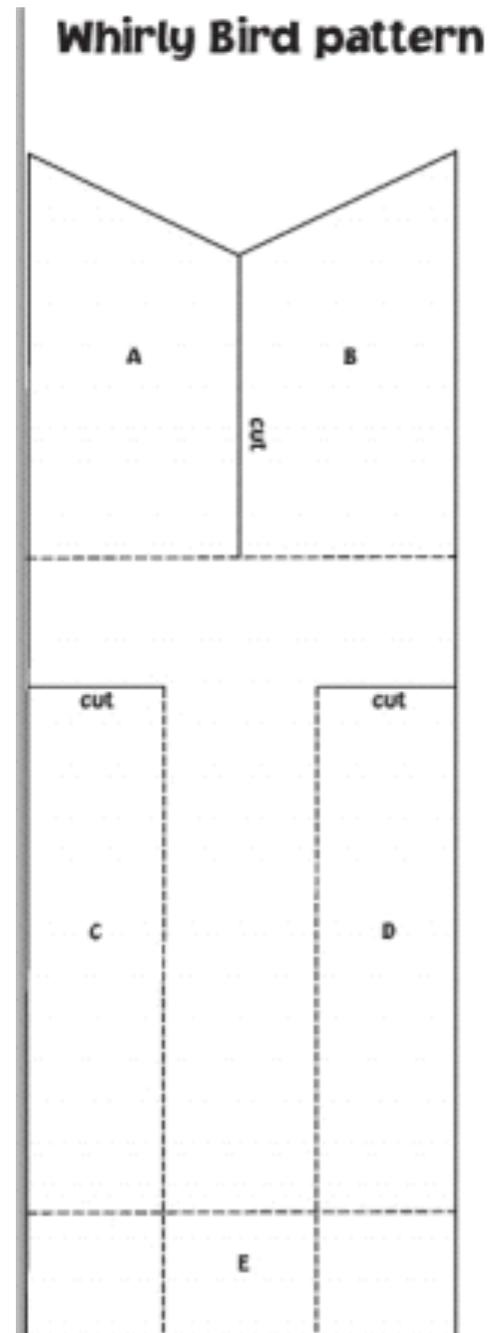


Directions:

How to Make a Whirly Bird Helicopter:

<http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/paper-helicopters3.htm>

- 1: Use the Whirly Bird pattern
- 2: Place pattern over colorful card stock. Cut out. Make the three cuts as indicated on the pattern.
- 3: Fold and cut the helicopter. Fold section C forward and section D backward. Bend the stem up at E. Fold A forward and B backward. Decorate with stickers. Hold at eye level and drop.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Discuss examples of small things that are important.
(Bees, Spiders, Diamonds, Teeth, Seeds, Worms, Plankton, etc.)

What small things do you know of that are important?

In what way are the little things we do the most important? i.e. paying attention to details, speaking a kind word, doing a kind gesture.

Think about the small things that are important for our bodies (eating the right food, drinking fresh water), our friendships (remembering birthdays, asking about others) and our schooling (penmanship, punctuation, etc.)

Tween & Teen Activity

Richard Carlson wrote a series of books entitled “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff ... and It’s All Small Stuff” that have been extremely successful, selling over 12 million copies. His message is to put a positive approach on circumstances in your life that cause you stress.

And, being a teenager can be stressful. Richard Carlson shows ways to overcome the small stuff without being irritated, bothered and annoyed by the day to day things that happen to all of us. With all the outside pressures that could put you on the wrong path, having tools to deal with criticism and conflict could be a great relief. If you don’t use your energy to address all the small stuff, then you can handle more complex issues in your life.

If you have the feeling that life is really hard, knowing that the way you look at your life may be creating the stress can set you free. You have control over how to deal with your life.

For example, From “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff for Teens”

- In the section “Check out the Chances,” the author explains how not everyone is going to like you and how you may not like everyone you meet.

- In “Become Button-Proof,” know that if someone’s unintentional or undesirable action sets you off, you have a choice. As they say, someone else may have pushed your button but they weren’t the one who installed it.
- In “Drop the Drama,” the author shares teen horror stories about what friend likes who today, what group does what to another group, how one girl hates another girl, and how it could all change tomorrow. However, you can be an observer, instead of a participant.

Discussion: If you didn’t have to be concerned with how others felt about you, what others say and do, your future, your past, how would you feel?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

NATIVE AMERICAN LORE

Week #4: Compassion for Our World

Main Message: When we view the world with compassion, we help lift the other people on the planet. Compassion means acceptance and love without judgment. Acts of kindness show our compassion.

- When we see others with love, we see without judgment.
- Treat others with compassion and empathy, as you would like to be treated.

Readings:

“O’ Great Spirit, help me always to speak the truth quietly, to listen with an open mind when others speak, and to remember the peace that may be found in silence.” ~ Cherokee Prayer

SOM 187:3¹: We may pass through good fortune and bad, but if we can come to the point where we are not disturbed by “things” we have found the secret. If, as Jesus said, we “judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment,” remembering that “things which are seen are not made of things which do appear;” if, I repeat, we can judge in this manner, out of any chaos we can produce harmony.

Lesson: Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked a mile in his moccasins.

This phrase (actually an idiom – a phrase with a figurative meaning) is usually credited to Native American sources, with the original being "walk a mile in another man's moccasins." The earliest traces of the teaching date back to the Cherokee tribe of Native Americans.

The phrase teaches us to move to a place of compassion before you criticize another person. Examples: Don't criticize another person's work until you've tried to do it yourself; don't judge another person's life until you've been forced to live it; you have to see what that person is going through to fully understand something about them.

If we understand where someone else is coming from, it can be a lot easier to show compassion.

Share the story. Ask your class, how do you feel about the situation? Now, share information they didn't know before. How do you feel about the situation now? Is it different? Why?

Story #1: You keep getting the spelling words wrong each week at school. This happens time and time again. Your parents are starting to question you on what is happening. You just don't know. You are trying your best.

Story #1 – Update: You go to the doctor and they find out you need glasses. You haven't been able to read the board clearly at school.

Story #2: You are invited to join some kids playing soccer. You tell them you don't want to play and they get mad. But, you really don't want to play.

Story #2 – Update: After school you are going to visit your grandparents and you don't want to get your clothes dirty.

Story #3: Your friend is telling you about his spring break trip. You are not listening or paying attention to what he is saying. Eventually he gives up and goes home.

Story #3 – Update: You have been checking your app on your iPod.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What does it mean to 'walk' in another man's shoes?

A1. It means to live his life with all of his past and present circumstances.

Q2. How can you understand someone else's feelings without experiencing them yourself?

A2. You can think about similar situations in your life or someone you know.

Q3. Did your opinion of the story change after you heard other circumstances? How can you apply this during the week?

A3. You never know everything going on in someone else's life. That is why a best first reaction is one of empathy.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

Craft: The Flip Flop Walk

Materials:

Flip flops
Paper
Tape
Ribbons,
Scissors



Directions:

Have every student trace their feet and cut out. Set the pairs of feet cut outs to make a trail around the room and tape down. Give each child a pair of flip flops to put on and follow the path of feet around the room.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

What is empathy all about?

Being able to empathize means to be capable of identifying and understanding another person's feelings, without experiencing them for yourself at that particular moment

The noun **em•pa•thy** refers to

- the ability to comprehend another person's actions and emotions
- the identification of thoughts and emotional states within others
- the capacity to understand a person's (emotional) reaction
- the awareness of another's problems, without experiencing them

Surprisingly, the ability to empathize with others is relative to a person's capacity to identify, feel and understand his own feelings and thereby being able to project one's feelings onto others. This means in turn that it becomes complicated at times to understand what a person is

undergoing, if you haven't undergone it for yourself – or at least felt similar feelings. A person that has experienced a variety of emotional states and feelings throughout his or her life – from the heights of victory, happiness and joy to the depths of defeat, sadness and anxiety – will find it easier to understand another person's problems and feelings. Furthermore, emotional intelligence enables a person to empathize with someone, without the need to have felt likewise in the past. Basically, it's the mental projection into the emotional state of mind of another person, allowing you to identify their feelings.

Tween & Teen Activity

With a partner, read through the scenarios, select one, and examine what is happening. What are the characters feeling? How do their actions and words show this? How are they not being empathetic?

1. A group of students is milling about in the hall. Micah teases Adam, a younger student, about not making the soccer team, and Adam argues back. The argument escalates to a shouting match.
2. You are excited to go out with your friends on a Friday night, but your mom wants you to go out to dinner with the family. You refuse, your mother grounds you, and you storm to your room.
3. The bell is about to ring, and everyone is rushing to their next class. In the rush, Samantha accidentally knocks books out of Dan's hands. Everyone laughs and keeps moving on while Dan turns red and scurries to pick up his books.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #7 & Month #8: The 8 Secrets to Happiness for Kids and Teens

Happiness is available to everyone. Many who desire it believe it comes from wealth, prestige, stuff, belongings, power over others or fame. This course explores if happiness does come from these or if, perhaps, it comes from somewhere else.

The secret of the secret is that it really isn't a secret. What you will find in this material will make sense to you. You intuitively know that these 'secrets' work this way. Your good fortune does not take away from others. Your happiness comes from within you not from outside of you. Each of us perceives the world through our own lens. Each of us can change our perception of the world to bring more happiness to ourselves and those around us.

Each of the secrets we will review are based upon eternal laws of the universe, or "The Golden Thread of Truth" that runs through all the world's religions. The truth of these laws are that they can be put in motion to make a difference in our lives. You will gain awareness of how you can use the laws to create your joyous life and achieve all that you desire.

Week #1: Create Freely

Week #2: Give & Receive

Week #3: Understand Karma

Week #4: Be Carefree

Week #5: Relish the Journey

Week #6: Enjoy Change

Week #7: Fear Not

Week #8: Expand Happiness

Optional Week #9: Outdoor Activities: Experiencing Flow and Nonresistance in Nature and Ourselves



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #1: Create Freely

Main Message: We have the freedom to create anything we desire for our lives. But to create freely means to create without resistance. Nature shows us the blueprint daily on how to create without resistance ... without putting any obstacles in the path. If we choose resistance such as fear, worry or doubt, we choose to block our own good. The only thing holding us back from realizing our desires is our resistance to it.

- You are meant to have happiness in your life.
- You are meant to achieve your dreams.

Readings:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

— Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of "A Course in Miracles"*

SOM 303.2¹: When Jesus said: “Resist Not,” He meant that non-recognition of evil is the only way to avoid it. This is true according to the law of cause and effect, for what we persist in recognizing we persist in holding in place. That which we refuse to recognize, we neutralize, and it is no longer there so far as we are concerned.”

Lesson: Our Resistant-Free Nature

How can a non-human item want or desire something? Maybe it can’t. Maybe the truth is since a caterpillar or turtle or salmon or tree has no resistance, it fulfills its desire every time. That would imply that the only thing holding us back from realizing our desires is our resistance to it.

Our resistance can come in many forms; a feeling that we don’t deserve it, or it is not possible or someone or something is blocking it. The law of creative freedom as in all desires, is completely free - without hindrance of any kind, and is universally true for each of us, just as it is for each animal and plant.

To Create Freely is to allow our desire to seek expression. A thought or urge wants to be made into form

- Just as a caterpillar wants to become a butterfly

- Just as a salmon wants to return to its birthplace to spawn
- Just as a turtle wants to return to its birthplace to nest
- Just as a tree wants to leaf in the spring

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why are the examples in nature free of resistance?

A1. The caterpillar, the tree, none had worry or fear about the change. They opened to receiving their true nature.

Q2. How can you achieve your dreams?

A2. Listen with your heart and trust your instincts.

Q3. How can you release resistance?

A3. Have faith and trust in the goodness of all that you encounter.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: This week's craft is a way for the children to practice resistant free, creative expression.

Craft: Finger Painting

Materials:

Finger paint

Paper

Clean-up materials

Directions:

Have Fun!



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Resistance is a choice.

No matter what happens in our lives, we all have a choice of how we are going to react to it. TedTalks is a wonderful place to find stories of people overcoming adversity. Below is a link to the story of Blake Haxton, a teenager who was also a champion rower with a scholarship to Harvard when adversity struck. Blake is the son of this author's cousin and a true inspiration.

Ted Talks with Blake Haxton

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZC8VzzOJ0I>

Q. Who has an example of adversity they have seen in themselves or others? What was the choice you or they made?

Tween & Teen Activity

The Free Fall!

The Free Fall is a classic activity of fearlessness. It requires you to trust the other teens in your class and to trust in the choice you are making.

The Free Fall activity is simple:

Have two students come to the front. One is the "faller" and one is the "catcher." The faller stands in front with his back to the catcher - arms crossed in front.

Fall back into the arms of the student behind you.

Switch Positions

Q. How did it feel to release resistance?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #2: Give & Receive

Main Message: The secret to attaining what we desire is to give what we seek. As with all laws of the Universe, there is a two way flow that creates a cycle. Everything has a dark and light, birth and death, open and closed, up and down. It is important to note that you cannot keep only one way open and continue to grow and flow. The cycle is to both give and to receive. Receiving is as important as giving, and for many people it is harder than giving.

- Money is love.
- Give with a joyous heart and be grateful for being able to give.

Readings:

Money is one of the most potent tools we have to transform our lives and the world. But we need a new bottom line. That new bottom line has to be love. To create a more balanced world we simply need to enter each monetary transaction – each exchange of the energy we call money – in a state of loving, caring, and sharing. When we begin to treat money as an agent to transmit love, we will create a just and prosperous world. ~ Barbara Wilder (Author of “Money Is Love”)

SOM 263.5¹: I always have an abundance of money and an abundance of whatever it takes to make life happy and opulent. There is a continuous movement toward me of supply, of money, of all that I need to express the fullest life, happiness and action.

Lesson: Silas Marner: by George Eliot

(Published in 1861. The story of a miser and his revelation in the power of love and money)

Silas Marner was a weaver who lived in a poor part of the city. He was falsely accused of stealing from the church. The bag which contained the money was found in his home so Silas was found guilty. His fiancé broke up with him and his life was in ruins.

Silas became a recluse and existed only to work and hoard his money. Shortly after, he was robbed of all his hard earnings and he sunk into even more misery. First, he lived for the love of his fiancé. Then, he lived for the love of his money. Now, both were gone.

By accident a young child, whose mother recently died, came to Silas' home and Silas opened both his heart and his home to her and named her Eppie. With Silas' love showering down on her, Eppie grew up to be the pride of the town. Silas had finally found, through love, a purpose for his life outside of money.

Suddenly, the ghost of the person who stole Silas' money appeared and returned Silas' gold. Eppie had many suitors come forward to claim her but, even though Silas was not her real father, he was her father in her heart. "I can't think o' no happiness without him." Eppie married a local boy and they provided Silas with grandchildren.

Silas realized that his happiness and unhappiness associated with whether or not he had money, was never a true happiness. The only real happiness was sharing of himself and his treasure with those he loved and being deserving of their love.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why is it important to give and receive?

A1. If we only receive, we can't keep the flow moving and the circulation becomes stagnant.

Q2. What is the secret to getting what we desire?

A2. We need to give what we seek ... friendship, love, money, etc. The act of giving activates the act of receiving.

Q3. How can I increase the circulation of money and love in my life?

A3. Give it to others. It can be a small thing, a smile, a hug, a compliment, etc.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft Give and receive from your heart

Craft: Giving Love

Materials:

Paper
Scissors
Markers

Directions:

Have the children cut out paper hearts and think about something nice about the other children in the classroom. Write this nice thought (or have the teacher write) on a heart for each child and give the heart to the others. Ideally, each child will receive one heart from each child in the class.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

What we see in the world around us, what we receive is a mirror of what we give.

Try this experiment in class: Team up in pairs and sit cross-legged facing each other. Have one child be the mirror and the other the reflection. The mirror can move their arms, make faces, or say things. The reflection needs to reflect the mirror as much as possible. Change sides.

Experiment with this during the week. Spend a day giving only and see how it makes you feel.

Give smiles - Give frowns - Give anger - Give compassion.

Tween & Teen Activity

What do you desire in your life?

Set up a large piece of paper or flip chart in the classroom. On one side of the paper, list things you would like to receive. On the other side, list ways you could give this same desire.

Example:

Want to Receive	How to Give
Respect from my parents	Show respect by opening door for my mom, putting my dad's tools away, picking up things at home (even if it's not my stuff), cooking dinner without being asked
Money to purchase things	Give time and talents to neighbors or friends - walk dogs, mow, water flowers, ask if they need help
Independence	Help others be independent by watching younger siblings, doing laundry, asking how you can help



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #3: Understand Karma

Main Message: What we put forth in our lives is what we will receive. The Law of Karma is present in every religion. It is a universal law of cause and effect.

-
- We reap what we sow
- You have a choice in every situation

Readings:

Karma is the eternal assertion of human freedom ... Our thoughts, our words, and deeds are the threads of the net which we throw around ourselves. -Swami Vivekananda

SOM 30.41: The conscious mind is superior to the subjective and may consciously use it. Great as the subconscious is, its tendency is set in motion by the conscious thought, and in this possibility lies the path to freedom. The Karmic Law is not Kismet. It is not fate but cause and effect. It is a taskmaster to the unwise; a servant to the wise.

Lesson: Lun Fan Eats His Own Fruit

Translated and edited by the Buddhist Yogi C. M. Chen

Mr. Lun Fan was a businessman of the An Ping district. His father died when he was still an infant. His mother lived under very difficult circumstances. He was taken care of by his mother and grew up. When his business became better, he then left his old mother alone in An Ping and brought his wife and his children to Fu San where he set up his business and gradually became rich. His friend advised him by saying, "You have now become rich; you should invite your old mother here, and let her have a good time to pass her old age." He refused and said, "My mother has a little farm. She still can work to get some production to feed herself." His friend disliked this answer and thought to himself that leaving his old mother would get no good result. Afterward it so happened. His sons were as bad as he was himself; his wife died, and he became poor again. Every neighbor said, "Lun Fan eats his own fruit!"`

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why did Lun Fan not give to his mother?

A1. He thought she had enough to survive.

Q2. Why were Lun Fan's friends disappointed in him?

A2. He was being stingy and unloving and not sharing his good fortune with his mother even though he had plenty to share.

Q3. How did Karma affect Lun Fan?

A3. His sons watched how he treated his mother, felt that was the right way to treat a parent, and in the end, when Lun Fan had lost everything, they did not share their good fortune with their father.

Activities/Crafts:

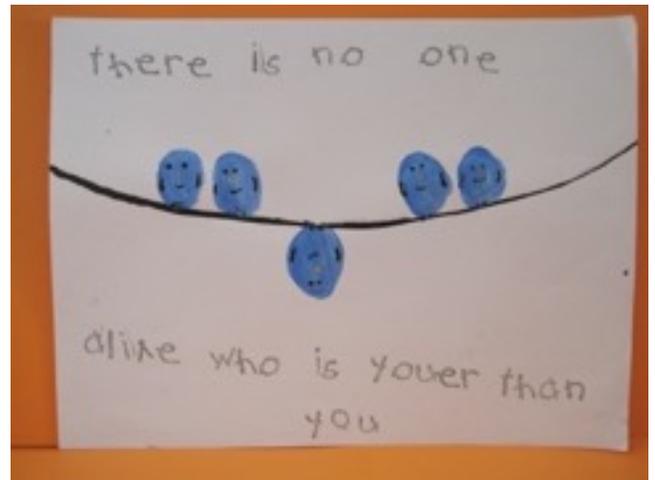
Symbolism of Craft What we cast as seed is what grows. The flowers symbolize the growth of a plant - each with a word attached of what we desire to reap

Craft: Reap what you sow pictures

Materials:

Paint/markers

Paper



Directions:

Draw a picture of a flower garden.

Use paint or markers for affirmative sayings.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

The idea of the law of cause and effect (we reap what we sow) is present in all of the world's religions. Below are some phrases taken directly from the sacred books.

Christian: Galatians 6: 7-8: Don't be misled; remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it: a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows! If he sows to please his own wrong desires, he will be planting seeds of evil and he will surely reap a harvest of spiritual decay and death; but if he plants the good things of Spirit, he will reap the everlasting life which the Holy Spirit gives him. And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessings if we don't get discouraged and give up. That's why whenever we can we should always be kind to everyone.

Muslim: Quran 4:40: Surely Allah does not do injustice to the weight of an atom, and if it is a good deed he multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward.

Hindu: Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5

According as one acts, so does he become. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.

Buddha: By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified."

Q. Why do you think this theme is consistent through every religion? What does it mean to you?

Tween & Teen Activity

Much of what we hear in our society can feed on fear; television news (The world is ending!), advertising (Your family isn't keeping up.), magazines (You have to be thinner to be attractive!).

Q. What influences in our society feed the misperceptions that cause the pain and separation between us and within us?

Examples:

Gossip

Rage

Advertising

Politics

Rich versus Poor

Bring magazines for the teens to look through and rip out examples.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #4: Be Carefree

Main Message: To live carefree is to live from a place of effortless ease. We are each unique manifestations of the Divine and we each have gifts and talents that are unique to us. One person might know just the right thing to say when comforting a friend and another knows how to make beautiful art from broken glass. Don't be jealous of what others can do, seemingly without effort. Rejoice that they have those gifts because, together, as we discover and share our gifts with the world, we move closer to a place of harmony for all.

- Go with the flow rather than fight it.
- Your internal guidance knows ease and grace.

Readings:

We must walk consciously only part way toward our goal and then leap in the dark to our success. ~Henry David Thoreau

SOM 232.4¹: It is necessary that we release all thoughts - as well as things - that clutter up our lives. We are reminded that there is something resembling the Divine in the intelligence and fearlessness of the organs of our body, in the way they take that which is necessary to their sustenance and well-being and release that which is not needed. If the organs of the body followed the average tactics of man in his acquisitive habits, if the lungs hoarded the air they take in, if the heart kept the fresh blood stored within its walls, refusing to allow it to circulate, if the stomach retained the food taken in for nourishment, what a static condition we would have! But, the very reverse is true. Such perfect assimilation, elimination and circulation have never been equaled by man in anything he has invented.

Lesson: “Let Go” ... Finding Nemo

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnERX32FL24>

Finding Nemo is a movie by Pixar about a father searching for his son, Nemo. He and his friend Dory, a generous, optimistic, loving fish with short term memory issues, go on a hunt for Nemo across the ocean. Nemo's father, Marlin, is full of worry and fear and, through the journey, discovers that the only way to find Nemo is by relying on the gifts and talents of those he encounters. He needs to “Let go,” literally, in order to complete the last part of his journey.

Dory: Hey, you OK?

Marlin: What is going on?

Dory: I don't know, I'll ask him...[Talking Whale]

Whale: [answers]

Dory: I think he says we've stopped.

Marlin: Of course we've stopped. Just stop trying to speak whale, you are going to make things worse. What is that noise? Oh no Look what you did! The water's going down ... it's, it's, it's going down!

Dory: Really, you sure about that?

Marlin: Look, already it's half empty!

Dory: Hm, I'd say it's half full.

Marlin: Stop that! It's half empty!

Whale: [whale talk]

Dory: Ok - that one was a little tougher. He either said we should go to the back of the throat, or he wants a root beer float.

Marlin: Of course he wants us to go there ... that's eating us! How do I taste Moby, do I taste good? You tell him I am not interested in being lunch!

Dory: Ok, [talking whale]

Marlin: Stop talking to him!

[Whale raises tongue]

Dory: OK [lets go].

Marlin: [grabs ahold of Dory] What are you doing?

Dory: He says it is time to let go! Everything's going to be all right!

Marlin: How do you know? How do you know something bad isn't going to happen?

Dory: [thinks] I don't!

Both let go and the whale blows them out his blowhole to safety.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What does it mean to live carefree?

A1. To not worry, share our gifts and appreciate the talents of others.

Q2. In the story, why did Dory and Marlin have different experiences inside the whale?

A2. Their perspectives were different. Dory believed things would all work out for the best.

Q3. How can your thoughts affect your world?

A3. Just like Dory and Marlin, how you see a situation determines the outcome. If Marlin had been alone, he probably would not have let go and would not have found his son.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: When we struggle against things, it becomes harder to accomplish our goals.

Craft: Large and small yarn mazes

Materials:
Lots of yarn!

Directions:
Large: Stretch yarn around the room, under tables, between chairs, with holes large enough for the children to fit through. Have them one by one or as a team move through as many of the 'holes' created by the yarn as possible.

Small: Cut 24" **pieces** of yarn and tie in a circle. Perfect for the children to do Jacob's Ladder.



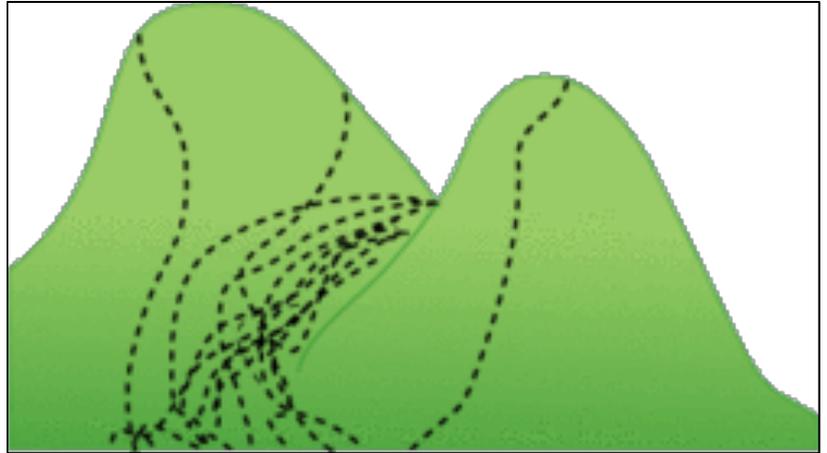
Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

There is a scientific path of least resistance that is used in nature, and by us, to describe why an object or liquid takes a given path. Water always flows along the path of least resistance, never going uphill or the harder way. Our forefathers, traveling across the west, tried to take the path of least resistance over the mountains, to save their energy and limited resources.

The principle was studied by George Kingsley Zipf who wrote *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology*, first published in 1949.

Q. Where do you see the path of least resistance in your daily life?

Examples: Studying for a test
Walking to a friend's house
Moving the soccer ball down the field



Tween & Teen Activity

Each of us has gifts and talents. That person can say just the right thing when a friend hears bad news. That person can draw. That person can inspire in his speech. That person grows the most beautiful roses on the block. The trick is not to be jealous of what they can do - seemingly without effort. In fact many times when you point out their gifts, the people will say, "Oh, I'm good at that" or "It really is nothing." And the point is, they are right. When you recognize what your gifts are, what you can do without resistance, what is easy for you, you are most of the way toward revealing your unique purpose. As more people discover and share their gifts, we move closer to heaven on earth or peace and harmony for all.

Group Circle: What can you do that other people think is hard but you think is easy?

Hit a baseball Put together an outfit Babysit Play the piano

Now you each get an opportunity to rejoice in another's gifts. When you recognize that the gifts of another in no way diminish your gifts, and you can embrace the gifts another has to give the world, you are living without jealousy, fear or self-doubt.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #5: Relish the Journey

Main Message: Being present in each moment of our lives leads to more happiness. When your mind is thinking of the future or worrying about the past, you cannot be fully present to the people, places and situations now. We will use passages from “The Power of Now” by Eckhart Tolle as we celebrate the moment of now. Practice the power for enjoying each moment.

- By focusing on the Now, you can relish each moment.
- Be present with the people around you.

Readings:

“Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in one pretty and well preserved piece, but to slide across the finish line broadside, thoroughly used up, worn out, leaking oil, and shouting GERONIMO!” ~ Bill McKenna (Professional motorcycle racer)

SOM 245.4¹: We should also erase the thoughts of yesterday that would rob us of today’s happiness. “There is nothing arising out of the past that can disturb me. The past, the present and the future are one unbroken stream of Good. I lose all thoughts that in the past have caused anxiety. The Spirit knows no past and is not affected by the belief in any. The past is swallowed up in the victory of a perfect present, which is filled with love and protection.” Equally we must not have fear for the future. “I see that the future is bright with promise. It beckons me forward into a more complete realization of my own worth and my rightful place in the Universe. All my tomorrows will be happy and filled with harmonious occupations. I look to the future with great and pleasurable anticipation, knowing it will expand my opportunity for radiant self-expression. I love my past and my future and understand that they are but continuations of the one unbroken chain of life. There is no future to be afraid of and no past to bring discord into the present.”

Lesson: Being Present

(Adapted from “The Power of Now” by Eckhart Tolle)

It is impossible to have a problem if your mind is fully focused on the Now. Each thing that comes up can be dealt with or accepted. It does not have to be put aside, ignored or criticized. We really don’t need to make it into a problem. If you put it off, and put other things off, they collect into hundreds of items that you will need to remember and worry about that may need your attention in the future. If you take care of each item as it comes up, you can release it and never collect any worries.

When you don’t collect any worries, you are left with ease, joy and lightness. You can relish the moment, which leads to the next moment and the next. Give your attention to the moments and completely accept what is. When you honor the present moment, all unhappiness and struggle dissolve, and life begins to flow with joy and ease. When you act out of present-moment awareness, whatever you do becomes infused with quality, care and love - even the

most simple action.

Be present in your life:

Don't watch television while you eat - put your attention on your food.

Look into people's eyes - focus on what they are saying.

Answer a question with another question to find out more about the person.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. How do we live in the Now?

A1. Put your attention to what is happening around you and accept or deal with circumstances as they arise.

Q2. Why should we live in the Now?

A2. We won't collect worries so can enjoy each moment.

Q3. What can help us live in the Now?

A3. Meditation to train our mind.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Our life's journey is a number of steps. Each step can be taken unconsciously or consciously and deliberately. This craft reminds us that we have a choice in how we take each step.

Craft: A Point in Time

Materials:

Construction paper

Markers/crayons

Scissors

Directions:

Have the child trace their foot and/or hand on a sheet of construction paper.

Cut it out and put your name on the foot. Add pictures of things that interest you now/today.

Put the date and time on the back.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

“The Power of Now” by Eckhart Tolle

In your everyday life, you can practice [The Power of Now] by taking a routine activity that normally is only a means to an end and giving it your fullest attention, so that it becomes an end in itself. For example, every time you walk up and down the stairs in your house or place of work, pay close attention to every step, every movement, even your breathing. Be totally present. Or when you wash your hands, pay attention to all the sense perceptions associated with the activity; the sound and feel of the water, the movement of your hands, the scent of the soap, and so on. Or when you get into your car, after you close the door, pause for a few seconds and observe the flow of your breath. Become aware of a silent but powerful sense of presence. There is one certain criterion by which you can measure your success in this practice; the degree of peace that you feel within.

Activity: Have the children perform a common activity with great deliberation. (wash hands, eat a banana, stretch, etc.) How does it feel, sound, taste, look, smell?

Tween & Teen Activity

Being Present - Releasing the Phone

Have you ever been in a situation where you are sitting next to a friend or a family member and you are both texting with other people? Or, you are sitting in a lecture or movie but thinking about what is coming up or what has happened in the past? The Power of Now suggests that by being present in the moment, not worrying about the future or the past, leads to more peace and happiness in our lives. The point is to relish the journey in our lives ... not to spend our time being distracted.

Activity: Have the teens take all their phones, tablets, pads, etc. and put them in a pile in a section of the room, out of reach, for the entire hour.

Have them sit quietly and clear their minds, focus on their breathing and play soft music.

Some find it helpful to say an affirmation: I am love. I am peace. etc. during their breathing.

Advanced activity: Leave phones off for the next hour, for the remainder of the day or for the week ... whatever your teens are up for. And have them share their results next week.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #6: Enjoy Change

Main Message: For most people, change is uncomfortable. And, for all people, change is an inherent part of life. Whether the change is 'good,' new job, new baby, or 'bad,' lost job, family sickness, change happens. The feelings associated with the change subside over time and many find that what was originally thought to be a problem was actually the best thing that could have happened. Do not fear change. Do not fear challenge. When challenges arise, and they do, an understanding of detachment can save you a lot of anguish.

- Life is not meant to be a struggle.
- Success and defeat are temporary and illusions.

Readings:

The only thing that is constant is change. - Heraclitus

SOM 126.11: Each one of us today is the result of the use he has made of the Law, either consciously or unconsciously. As soon as we realize this we shall see that what we are now (or what we now have and experience) is the result of what we have thought; and the answer to what we shall be is contained in what we are now thinking. For we can change our thinking!

Lesson: Publishing the Sutras (Zen Stories)

Tetsugen, a devotee of Zen in Japan, decided to publish the sutras, which at that time were available only in Chinese. The books were to be printed with wood blocks in an edition of seven thousand copies, a tremendous undertaking.

Tetsugen began by traveling and collecting donations for this purpose. A few sympathizers would give him a hundred pieces of gold, but most of the time he received only small coins. He thanked each donor with equal gratitude. After ten years Tetsugen had enough money to begin his task.

It happened that at that time the Uji River overflowed. Famine followed. Tetsugen took the funds he had collected for the books and spent them to save others from starvation. Then he began again his work of collecting.

Several years afterwards an epidemic spread over the country. Tetsugen again gave away what he had collected, to help his people.

For a third time he started his work, and after twenty years his wish was fulfilled. The printing blocks which produced the first edition of sutras can be seen today in the Obaku monastery in Kyoto.

The Japanese tell their children that Tetsugen made three sets of sutras, and that the first two invisible sets surpass even the last.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What changed for Tetsugen?

A1. Situations that he didn't expect occurred that changed his plans.

Q2. How did he react to the change?

A2. Tetsugen used his time, talents and treasure to take care of those most in need.

Q3. Why do parents tell their children that the invisible Sutras far surpass the set Tetsugen made?

A3. The Sutras teach our love for each other and the first two demonstrated this love.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Change can be good and beautiful

Craft: Water Drop Flowers

Materials:

Pipe cleaners

Water

Paper towels

Food coloring

Eye dropper/medicine dropper/straw

Directions:

Cut paper towels into 4x4 squares.

Mix food coloring in water.

Drop different colors on paper towels.

Twist the centers of the paper towels together and secure with pipe cleaners.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Each person on the planet is following his or her own internal guidance and since we are all different, there is bound to be conflict. Conflict that is solved by harming others will always escalate. If the conflict ends in one's defeat, it is just an illusion because it is human nature to overcome defeat. Overcoming defeat is inherent in each of us and, society's current fashion of what defines 'success' also defines 'defeat.' So it changes with time and is temporary and cannot be achieved.

There is a beauty to the change in life. If we did not have any contrast, life would be very dull. Your life is constantly changing. Your body, the weather, your lessons. And the way our society views 'success' and 'defeat,' 'good' and 'bad,' is also constantly changing.

Examples:

In the past, women could not vote, blacks were not free, we threw pollution into our oceans and streams, we didn't know cigarettes were bad for us.

Q. What do you see in our culture today that is defined as 'good' or 'bad' that you think will change?

Tween & Teen Activity

When we change from the way we do things to a new way, it can feel uncomfortable. Feeling comfortable with change, and embracing it, will help you with ease and comfort throughout your life.

Experiment with these ways to change:

Clasp your hands together. Which index finger is in front? The right or left? Now, clasp your hands the other way. How does it feel?

Change the way you are wearing your clothes. Put your shoes on the wrong feet. Put your shirt on backwards. How does it feel?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #7: Fear Not

Main Message: When we seek the approval of others, we are moving away from our Dharma (purpose). Only we can know what is truly easy or carefree for us ... what comes easily, without resistance. If someone wants us to do something that we find hard, say be an extroverted socialite when that makes us really uncomfortable, they are asking us to do something we have resistance to so it is contrary to our nature. The wisest family and friends feed the strengths of those they love to support them in their happiness.

- What you think of me is none of my business.
- Judgement is artificial and temporary.

Readings:

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. ~ Eleanor Roosevelt:

SOM 178.2¹: We find that prayer is essential to happiness, for righteous prayer sets the law of the Spirit of life in motion for our good. Prayer is essential to the conscious well-being of the soul. Prayer has stimulated countless millions to higher thoughts and better lives. Prayer is its own answer. Before our prayer is framed in words the possibility of its answer already exists.

Lesson: People in Glass Houses Shouldn't Throw Stones

There was once a family who purchased a new house. The house was in the middle of town, up on a hill that could view the entire village. The house was made of glass. The people in the house would spend their time looking out into the village and commenting on what they saw. "Look at the boy down there," said the daughter, "He just spit on the sidewalk! How disgusting!" "Look at the young woman down there," said the boy, "She is flirting with all the young men who walk by!" "Look at the mother with the baby down there," said the mother, "She is letting her baby cry and cry and not even picking her up to comfort her." And the father said, "Look at the merchant down there. The stoop in front of his shop is messy with garbage and dirt."

But, what the family should have realized was that, while they could see out, the entire village could also see into their home. They could see the father sitting around all day and not doing productive work. They could see the mother's messy kitchen and house. They could see the boy and girl, without friends, staring and judging them. The village decided to do something about it. They marched up the hill and knocked on the door and declared: *Do not judge others if you do not want to be judged. All of us live in a glass house and love and compassion will earn you the most friends.*

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why did the family sit and judge others?

A1. They didn't have anything they loved. They didn't have any purpose for their lives. So they didn't know what else to do.

Q2. How would it feel to be a villager?

A2. It wouldn't feel good if I knew someone was sitting and judging me at every moment.

Q3. How does this story relate to cause and effect?

A3. How we spend our time, be it judging, loving, giving or laughing, is what we will attract more of into our lives.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: The child's picture in a glass or plastic container symbolizes that people in glass houses are completely open and loving with the world around them.

Craft: Pictures in baby food jars or cups

Materials:

Pictures (real or drawn)

Baby food jars or clear plastic cups

Directions:

Put the picture in the glass jar to remind students of the story.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Any walk through a museum or gallery of art will show you that society's definition of what constitutes beauty changes. Even flipping through your parents' photo album will show you that what was considered good clothes or good hair can look ridiculous a few decades or even years later. The problem with trying to achieve what other people say is correct is that "they" are wrong. Current trends can be temporary and arbitrary. The only permanence is the value of the individual. Celebrating our individual gifts is celebrating the divinity in others. We really do a harm to ourselves, to society and to our growth as humanity when we judge or label people based on current trends.

Our true growth can only come when we consciously celebrate and cherish the unique qualities of each of us. And these are usually the ones that are resistant free. The ones that come easily to us. When we are truly happy, we do not feel superior to anyone else. We can't, because we realize our unique gifts are limited and that others have unique gifts that we cannot express. Then we can rejoice in the wholeness of our unity. It is only through everyone expressing their gifts that all gifts can be expressed.

With this understanding you do not feel jealousy. You respect all people and truly admire yourself.

Q. How does society change its perception of 'good' and 'bad' through the years?

Tween & Teen Activity

What you think of me is none of my business .

This may seem like an odd statement, in fact it is the title of a book by Terry Cole-Whittaker, Religious Science minister. But, it is true if you think about it.

Other people view us through their own lens of experience. So, another's view of you is basically irrelevant. The only thing that is important is how you view yourself.

Sometimes how we feel about ourselves is a response to outside influences on our thoughts of what we are told we should be, look like, do, earn, wear, or drive. We carry a judgement if

these items are good or bad. We have a good job, a good car, a good home. Two problems with this. First there is no end to other people's views of us because there is always something 'better' we can be or have. A better job. A better figure. Second, we always introduce resistance. If, for example, we are not born with a nose or chin that is considered the standard of beauty, we are put in the trap of being on the other side of "good" which is "bad." And, since no one is on the "good" side of everything, using this criteria, happiness cannot be reached.

It is only by knowing and releasing attachment to these artificial judgements that we can be happy.

Activity: Pass out a piece of paper to each teen. Now ask them to think about the following:

Think of yourself. Think of who you are, what you do, what you want to be, what you have been.

Now, start releasing these things until you get to your inner essence. First, you are somebody's daughter or son, release this. You may be someone's sibling, an animal's owner, an athlete, a scholar, a musician, a computer whiz, a gamer. Release all of these. Release how you feel about how you look. Release who you are to your friends, at church, at school, at your club, in your neighborhood. Release all components of yourself. Release any other ways you describe yourself.

Now you have your inner essence. All that is left is just you.

Now, on your piece of paper, write down a number between 1 and 10 that describes how you feel about yourself with #1 being "not so good" and #10 being "magnificent." There are no wrong answers. You will not need to share. Write down a number now.

Open your eyes. If there are any teens who would like to share their number and talk about it, take some time to do so.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Week #8: Expand Happiness

Main Message: Your happiness will naturally expand the happiness of others in the world. If you create more happiness in your life, it does not take away from the happiness of others. When you respect others and their gifts and talents, people respect you. True happiness does not come from needing the acceptance of others, especially if this acceptance is based on artificial and fleeting judgements and circumstances. When you see that happiness comes from within yourself, not from outside yourself, you have all the tools you need.

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- Happiness is an inside job.
- If you create more happiness in your life, it does not take away from the happiness of others.

Readings:

Most of our energy goes into upholding our importance. If we are capable of losing some of that importance, two extraordinary things would happen to us. One, we would free our energy from trying to maintain the illusory idea of our grandeur; and two, we would provide ourselves with enough energy to catch a glimpse of the actual grandeur of the universe. ~ Don Juan, "The Art of Dreaming"

SOM 47.11: A treatment is a statement in the Law, embodying the concrete idea of our desires and accompanied by the unqualified faith that the Law works for us, as we work with It. Let us waste no further time looking for the secret of success or the key to happiness. Already the door is open and whosoever will may enter.

Lesson: The 8 Secrets to Happiness

When you follow all of these secrets, you naturally expand happiness in yourself and others.

The coming civilization of the New Humanity will recognize, and then emphasize, that all people are already united by the fact that they are all equally the expression of one life. No line of action can be really fruitful unless it is in complete harmony with this truth. The future of humanity is in the hands of those who have this vision. ~ Meher Baba

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why is our personal happiness important for our planet?

A1. Happiness or peace within each person will do away with the need for quarrels or wars.

Q2. How can we help others attain happiness?

A2. By being an example of peace and happiness ourselves.

Q3. What can I do to help promote peace and happiness?

A3. Prayer.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: This activity is about expansion. It is a fun, outside activity. Prepare for an explosion!

Craft: Mentos and Diet Coke Geyser

Materials:

2 Liter Diet Coke bottle

Mint flavored Mentos - 1 roll or box

1 piece of paper

Directions:

1. This activity is probably best done outside in the middle of an abandoned field, or better yet, on a huge lawn.
2. Carefully open the bottle of soda. Position the bottle on the ground so that it will not tip over.
3. Unwrap the whole roll of Mentos. The goal is to drop all of the Mentos into the bottle of soda at the same time (which is trickier than you'd think). One method for doing this is to roll a piece of paper into a tube just big enough to hold the loose Mentos. You'll want to be able to position the tube directly over the mouth of the bottle so that all of the candies drop into the bottle at the same time.
4. Don't drop them into the bottle just yet! Warn the spectators to stand back. Get ready to move back as soon as you drop them in.
5. Watch the geyser!



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Anything that triggers me is an opportunity to change something in myself. It is NEVER about someone else or the circumstance. If someone says something to you that makes you angry, sad, jealous or mad, it is always your lens that creates the emotion.

One way to know this is always true is to realize that something that may really make you mad may not phase the next person in the least. Let's say someone walking their dog and it takes a poop on your lawn. How will you react?

[Let the kids answer what they think their reaction would be.]

Did you find one person might be very angry and another person might laugh?

In every situation, if you are triggered with anger or fear, remember, that is your own view of the situation. If you are angry, are you angry at the dog? Are you angry at the owner? If you get a strong emotional reaction and don't know why, you may want to think about it. Perhaps you worked really hard taking care of your yard and you feel the dog ruined it. Perhaps you don't want to pick up the dog poop (Who does?). Perhaps you recently had someone leave litter on your lawn. Whatever it is, it is better to know why you are reacting a certain way so you can change it if you wish.

Tween & Teen Activity

Recite together - a prayer for world peace. Have the teens write it down and repeat it at home through the week.

The ultimate source, the divine spirit, flows through all things.

I am one with this Spirit and I know that all of my classmates, my teachers, everyone in my church, my community, my city, my state and my world are one with this Spirit.

I now know that each of us is in alignment with Divine Spirit. All feel peace, harmony, brotherly love, happiness and clarity.

The world is infused with brotherly love and Divine Source guides all that has been and all that will be.

I feel at ease knowing happiness is the birthright for all.

I give thanks for the Law and the way it works. I give thanks for my fellow passengers on this planet. I give thanks for everything in my life.

I release this prayer into the Law, knowing it is already done as I have spoken. A world of harmony, peace and love is cradled in the arms of the Divine.

And So It Is.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

THE 8 SECRETS TO HAPPINESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Optional Week #9: Outdoor Activities: Experiencing Flow and Nonresistance in Nature and Ourselves

Use this extra Sunday to bring the children outdoors and experience the resistant free nature of our world. Below are some activities you can choose from to strengthen these concepts with the kids.

Working together without resistance!

Wheelbarrow Races

Three Legged Races

Potato Sack Races

Hula Hoop Races

Jump Rope Races

Give & Receive

Crazy Clothes Relay

Your kids will get a kick out of this hilarious relay. You will need two sets of a few clothing items such as large T-shirts, sunglasses, and hats. Line your class up in two teams. Each student will take a turn dressing in the given clothes (putting them on over their own) and then running to the end of the playground and back. Once the students make it back, they must undress and tag the next person in line.

Relish the Journey

Egg Relay

Young students love races! Divide your class into several teams. Allow your students to race to the finish line carrying raw eggs on a spoon. The first player to cross the line wins the race.

Bat Spin Relay

At the starting signal, the first players on each team will run down to their team's bat, stand the bat up, bend over to put their head on the bat, quickly spin around 10 times with their head on the bat, and then run back to their team to tag the next player. Play continues until all players have gone.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #9: Tales from the Torah

The focus of this workbook is to share these timeless truths that support a life of peace, happiness and creativity. This month's lessons come from the Torah, the Jewish sacred text.

Week #1: Creation

Week #2: Loving Kindness

Week #3: Oneness: Rosh Hashanah

Week #4: Illumination: The 10 Commandments – Metaphysical Interpretation



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

TALES FROM THE TORAH

Week #1: Creation

Teacher Notes: The Torah is a sacred text and an important part of the Jewish community. It is read publicly and includes the first 5 books of the Hebrew Bible. It is important to note that these 5 books also are included in the Old Testament of the Bible. Muslims refer to the Torah as Tawrat (توراة, "Law"), an Arabic word for the revelations given to the Islamic prophet Musa (موسى, "Moses").

The Torah is believed to have been given to Moses directly from God. Its teachings outline the Law and how to live consistent with our spiritual nature.

Reading the Torah publicly is one of the bases for Jewish communal life. The holiday of Simchat Torah literally means "Rejoicing in the Torah." This holiday marks the completion of the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings. Each week in the synagogue, Jews publicly read a few chapters from the Torah, starting with Genesis, chapter 1 and working their way to Deuteronomy 34. On Simchat Torah,

they read the last Torah portion, then proceed immediately to the first chapter of Genesis, reminding them that the Torah is a circle, and never ends.
For more information, visit: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah>

Main Message: The Torah is the foundation of a child's Jewish education. It is read publicly every year. Just as we typically start our traditional schooling in the fall, Jewish children complete the cycle of their Torah teachings on the holiday Simchat Torah. Many confirmation ceremonies or ceremonies marking the beginning of a child's Jewish education are held at this time.

Simchat Torah celebrates the annual completion of the Torah readings and is a time of great celebration. There are processions around the synagogue carrying Torah scrolls and plenty of high-spirited singing and dancing in the synagogue with the Torahs. As many people as possible are given the honor of an aliyah (reciting a blessing over the Torah reading); in fact, even children are called for an aliyah blessing on Simchat Torah. In addition, as many people as possible are given the honor of carrying a Torah scroll in these processions. Children do not carry the scrolls (they are much too heavy), but often follow the procession around the synagogue, sometimes carrying small toy Torahs (stuffed plush toys or paper scrolls).

- The Torah is a sacred book full of lessons on life.
- It is a collection of lessons delivered through Moses.

Readings:

Genesis 1:1-5: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

SOM Reading: 66-5¹: Creation means the giving of form to the Substance of Mind or Spirit. Spirit being All and Only, there is nothing for It to change into but Itself. Therefore, it is the changeless, within which must take place all change or manifestation of Itself. The Infinite of Itself is formless but within It are contained all the forms which give expression to Its consciousness. Spirit is the Limitless within which is all space. Spirit is timeless, within which is all time. Creation and experience is measured by time and has a beginning and an end.

Lesson: The Torah – A Metaphysical Interpretation

The Torah contains the first five books of Biblical Hebrew, primarily made up of God's instructions to Moses. It is thoroughly and publicly read every year - completing a cycle from beginning to end. The five books of the Torah are:

- Bereishith (In the beginning...) (Genesis)
- Shemoth (going out...) (Exodus)
- Vayiqra (And He called...) (Leviticus)
- Bamidbar (In the wilderness...) (Numbers)
- Devarim (Second law...) (Deuteronomy)

The Torah – A Metaphysical Interpretation

Genesis I: In the beginning was Love. And the love was called God. And God showed his love by creating the universe, and the planets, and the water and the sky, the flowers and the trees, the sun and the fish and the birds and the animals.

Genesis II: Adam and Eve came from God and are God. Adam and Eve lived in Eden, a place of pure peace, joy and love. God gave Adam and Eve free will to make choices. Through their choices, they would learn the path to get closer to God while they were on Earth.

Exodus: God shares his laws with Moses. Exodus details the story of the people of Israel worshiping “The Golden Calf.” The true law is the presence of God within each of us, not a separate statue. Moses receives and shares the 10 Commandments.

Leviticus: The laws outlined in Leviticus focus on respect for the animals and plants of the earth. And, respecting ourselves and others.

Numbers: The book of Numbers focuses on the importance of community and love for one another. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years, after their freedom from slavery. The Festival of Sukkot, and use of the sukkah - a fragile dwelling, show us how symbols from the past can help us remember what our ancestors did to gain our freedom.

Deuteronomy: Contains the final messages that Moses received from God. It includes guidance on matters of law, war, rituals and religious celebrations.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What is the Torah?

A1. It is a book of Divine Law.

Q2. Why was Love the only thing in the beginning?

A2. Love is the essence of God.

Q3. Why is the Torah read publicly every year?

A3. It reminds us of the importance of how we conduct ourselves in life and of our oneness with God.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: The Torah

Craft: Create small Torahs

Materials:

Smartie candies

Ribbon

Wrapping paper

Scissors

Tape

Directions:

Cut out rectangles of wrapping paper to roll around two Smartie candy rolls. Secure with tape and tie a ribbon around the bundle.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Torah is the common Hebrew word for 'law' – so rendered over 200 times in the Old Testament. It is used for human instruction, but it usually expresses Divine Law. This section of the Old Testament (the first five books) is constantly referred to in the scriptures as the “Law of Moses” or “The Law of the Lord.” The Torah even became the name of the entire Jewish scripture.

The word "Torah" is a tricky one, because it can mean different things in different contexts. In its most limited sense, Torah refers to the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. But the word Torah can also be used to refer to the entire Jewish Bible (the body of scripture known to non-Jews as the Old Testament and to Jews as the Tanakh or Written Torah), or in its broadest sense, to the whole body of Jewish law and teachings.

The scriptures used in services are written on parchment scrolls. You are not supposed to touch the parchment on these scrolls; some say because they are too holy; others say because the parchment, made from animal skins, is a source of ritual defilement; and some say because your fingers' sweat has acids that will damage the parchment over time. Instead, you follow the text with a pointer, called a Yad. "Yad" means "hand" in Hebrew, and the pointer usually is in the shape of a hand with a pointing index finger. The scrolls are kept covered with fabric, and often ornamented with silver crowns on the handles of the scrolls and a silver breastplate on the front.

The scrolls are kept in a cabinet in the synagogue called an "ark," as in Ark of the Covenant, not as in Noah's Ark. The Ark of the Covenant was the subject of “Raiders of the Lost Ark” movies.

Tween & Teen Activity

Simchat Torah celebrates the circle of never ending life.

Celebrate with these circle activities:

1. Hula Circle

1. Form two circles of at least 6 each (or one group if less people).
2. Place a hula hoop in the circle.
3. See which group can move the hula hoop around the circle first.

2. Sit down

1. Form two circles of at least 6 each (or one group if less people).
2. Arrange the circle so each person is sitting on another person's lap.
3. Hold for 10 seconds.

Discussion:

1. How did leadership play in these activities? Did someone speak out? How did you react?
2. How does a new year impact a circle? What does the new school year mean to the phrase 'never ending'?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

TALES FROM THE TORAH

Week #2: Loving Kindness

Teacher Notes: Yom Kippur is the day of atonement. In Judaism, it is common to share the story of Jonah and the Whale during the afternoon since the story shares of God's willingness to forgive those who repent. The book of Jonah in the Bible is different from the other books because it is completely a narrative of Jonah's adventure. Jonah is also mentioned in the Christian New Testament, the Quran and by Mohammad. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonah> for more information.

Main Message: The Jewish religion celebrates Yom Kipper on October 4 this year. The story of Jonah and the Whale is shared to illustrate God's loving kindness. The book of Jonah is read every year, in its original Hebrew and in its entirety, on Yom Kipper - Day of Atonement, as the afternoon prayer. In the story, Jonah runs away from his responsibilities and is washed into the sea. He is swallowed by a whale and spends 3 days and 3 nights inside the whale's belly. After this time, he knows he must ask God for forgiveness for running away and the fish returns him to shore.

- The book of Jonah highlights God's patience and loving kindness.
- We are always given a second chance.

Readings:

Jonah: 1:17: Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 2:9-10: I will never worship anyone but you! For how can I thank you enough for all you have done? I will surely fulfill my promises. For my deliverance comes from the Lord alone.

SOM Reading: 457:41: ... Forgiveness is eternal and ever available.

Lesson: Jonah and the Whale

Jonah was a prophet. One day God asked Jonah to go to a place called Ninevah and tell the people living there to live with knowing God in their hearts. But, Jonah did not want to help the people there so he ran away and got on a ship sailing across the Mediterranean Sea. Shortly after the boat left shore, there was a very large storm. Jonah was just sleeping in the bottom of the boat. Then the sea got rougher and it became a larger storm and the storm washed water over the boat and tossed it up in the air. The sailors were afraid but Jonah knew what to do. He said, "The sea is very rough because I have disobeyed God. Throw me overboard and you will live." But they did not want Jonah to die. "It is the only way," said Jonah. So, the sailors threw him over the side of the ship. But what was outside the boat? A great big whale. This whale saw Jonah and swallowed him whole. Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three full days and three full nights.

Just think for a second what it would be like to be inside of a whale. There are no windows, and lots of strange things floating around that you can't see because it is so dark. Jonah probably didn't know if he would ever see daylight again.

While he was in the whale, he thought about God, and what he had done, and knew that he had not been doing his best. He knew that he had to do what was best for himself and the people of Ninevah. He thought about how he had run away. He was grateful that he did not drown. God forgave Jonah and the whale spit Jonah out onto the land and swam away. Jonah was slimy and smelly and was very happy to be out of the dark belly of the fish.

So Jonah went to the town of Ninevah and told the people that they must understand that they needed to do the right thing. Jonah was happy that the people listened to him and they were grateful to God and sorry for the bad things they had done. Everyone knew that God loved them and their city would not be destroyed.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What is a prophet?

A1. Someone who tries to live by the ways of God and someone who will share God's love with others.

Q2. Why was Jonah grateful to be swallowed by a whale?

A2. Because if he hadn't been swallowed, he would have drowned and died.

Q3. Why did the whale spit Jonah out?

A3. Once Jonah knew that he needed to help the people of Ninevah and not run away from it, the whale assisted in helping Jonah complete his mission.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft Jonah and the Whale:

Craft: Jonah in the whale balloon or paper

Food: Goldfish crackers

Materials:

Whale template

Blue paper

Small sandwich bags

Small fuzz ball, marble or gumball

Glue

Scissors

Directions:

Trace template onto two pieces of 8 ½

X 11 blue paper. Cut out. Cut a circle

out of one of the whales. Place fuzz

ball, gumball or marble in small plastic

bag to represent Jonah. Seal bag. Put

glue on the inside edges of the whale

with the circle cut out of it – including

around the circle. Center plastic bag over circular hole, press down. Match the other whale

cutout to the glued piece and press together.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

From a metaphysical perspective, the story of Jonah and the Whale represents what happens when someone forgets that all of God is good and limitless abundance. Jonah was told that the people of Ninevah had to realize they were being bad. But, he knew the truth that there was only good. So his reaction was to run away from this inconsistency. But, we all know you can't run away from yourself. His field of thought was disturbed because he wasn't in equilibrium and storms ensued. Jonah was open enough spiritually to know that what was in the conscious mind and subconscious mind had to be in balance. When he was swallowed by the whale, it represented an opportunity for Jonah to center with the truth.

When the conscious mind casts out the evil thought, it falls into the subconscious mind, the ocean or waters of life. Jonah fell into the water which represented cleansing and vital energy and was then swallowed up by a great fish, or idea of increase. Fish represent the idea of increase; the inexhaustible abundance of ideas present everywhere.

God does not desert those who have given themselves to Him, so Jonah was watched over, in all his wanderings, by the infinite good. When he was released by the whale to dry land (the surface of the body), Jonah was back in balance. As an example of this manifestation, when he talked to the people of Ninevah, they knew only that God was Good.

Tween & Teen Activity

Lead the teens in a meditation. Invite them to have a pencil and paper ready to write down their thoughts. This is an individual writing activity.

Jonah ran away from his responsibility to talk to the people of Ninevah. He was afraid of what might happen and saw this as something he did not want to do. He was in fear.

This meditation will give you the opportunity to explore areas of your life where you might be acting like Jonah. What are you running away from? When have there been times that you haven't been authentic? When have you tried to hide?

Meditation:

Take three deep breaths.
Relax the muscles behind your eyes.

Think of the story of Jonah and let's explore on a metaphysical level.

Jonah had the responsibility to tell the people of Ninevah that they were being bad. But he was in turmoil. He knew that God was only Good. He knew that the truth was only harmony. For a moment, feel the feeling of disharmony in your body. Disharmony is always temporary. Now, feel the harmony of good in your body. Harmony comes from knowing that God is only good. All things, all circumstances, all people.

Jonah ran away. But, Jonah was aware enough to know that his conscious and subconscious mind were not in balance. This created the storm. Feel the storm that arises when your conscious and subconscious mind are not in balance. This feeling can be uncertainty, anger, insecurity. Now, feel the emotion of peace and calm. When Jonah entered the waters, they were calmed. The ocean represents the water of life. The cleansing and vital energy of life. Fish always represent the idea of unlimited abundance. As you see Jonah, or yourself, falling into the calming waters, cradled by the whale of unlimited abundance, know that it is the pleasure of the divine to shower you with all thoughts, words, actions and relationships to create the greatest good for you.

You are never deserted or alone. You are supported and protected and uplifted.

Now, think to yourself... What are you running away from?
When have there been times that you haven't been authentic?
When have you tried to hide?

Please take 5-10 minutes to journal now.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

TALES FROM THE TORAH

Week #3: Oneness: Rosh Hashanah

Teacher Notes: Rosh Hashanah, like all of the Jewish holidays, starts at sunset the night before and may last for one or more days. Visit [“A Gentile's Guide to the Jewish Holidays”](#) for a simple overview. This lesson will focus on the shofar, a simple horn that is used to celebrate the start of a new year and symbolizes the remembrance to live a good life.

Main Message: The Jewish religion celebrates this time of year. It is a day to celebrate the start of the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah celebrates the beginning of the Jewish New Year. The shofar is a simple ram's horn that Jews are commanded to sound on the solemn days of the New Year. It reminds people of the Jewish faith that the power of their hearts is more powerful than any event in their lives. They are reminded that they are meant to live a good and holy life. People of the Jewish faith show their gratitude to God by obeying His commandments.

- Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is a day Jews are reminded to live a good and holy life.
- The shofar is a simple ram's horn the sounds on holy holidays to lift the hearts of those of Jewish faith.

Readings:

Torah: Deut. 30:2: Beginning on the second day and continuing until Rosh Hashanah, the custom is to blow the shofar ever day (except the Shabbat). It is my hope that this will encourage you to "return to the lord and listen to his voice."

SOM Reading: 470:31: The Universe holds nothing against us. No matter how many mistakes we have made, we are still perfect beings within, and the within may become the without, if we will carefully train ourselves to listen to the inner voice of truth which speaks to us in our moments of quietness and solitude.

Lesson: Shofar in the High Seas

Even on the high seas, the shofar reveals the greatness of God...

A great and saintly rabbi was once aboard a ship, together with two of his disciples. Rosh Hashanah drew near and land was not in sight yet. So the rabbi and his disciples prepared to spend the holy days of Rosh Hashanah on the high seas.

On the night of Rosh Hashanah a terrific storm broke out. The ship was tossed about by the

huge waves and was in grave danger of breaking up. The big waves swept over the ship again and again, flooding it from bow to stern. The sailors worked hard to bale the water out, until they had no strength left in them. It seemed only a matter of time before the ship would sink, unless the storm passed immediately.

During all this time the saintly rabbi sat in his cabin, engrossed in prayer, paying no attention to the storm threatening the ship. At dawn, when the storm had not let up, his two disciples decided to tell the rabbi of the danger that threatened all of them.

Entering his cabin, and finding him engrossed in prayer, they hesitated and withdrew, finding no courage to disturb him. A little while later they tried again, but again they turned back, not daring to disturb him. Finally, when the storm seemed to have reached its height and it was a matter of minutes before they would all be drowned, the disciples decided there was no time to be lost. With trembling voices and tears in their eyes they approached the rabbi and told him of the danger they were in.

"If this is the case, then waste no time. Bring the shofar quickly and let us fulfill the sacred commandment of sounding the shofar while we still are alive," the rabbi said.

The disciples brought the shofar, and soon the sound of the shofar was heard through the boat – "tekiah, shevarim, teruah, tekiah... ah... ah..." And the high winds seemed to snatch up the sounds of the shofar and carry them far away...

Suddenly the wind began to calm down, as if afraid to drown out the holy sounds of the shofar. Also, the roar of the sea grew quieter and quieter and before long there was perfect calm over the water. The last sounds of the shofar rang clearly in the stillness of the early morning.

It was a wonderful miracle!

The captain and the sailors and many passengers, following the sound of the shofar, came to the rabbi's cabin, where they found the rabbi and his two disciples joyfully concluding the solemn shofar service.

Amazed and full of awe, they bowed their heads in respect, and when the rabbi concluded the service, the captain said, "That is certainly a magical horn that you have there, for it has changed the stormy sea into a calm lake. If you will sell it to me, I will give you anything you

wish for it."

The rabbi smiled as he answered, "No, my friend, it is not a magical horn, but a shofar, a simple ram's horn, which we Jews are commanded to sound on the solemn days of our New Year. It raises a storm in our hearts, which is mightier than the storm of the sea, for it calls us to return to God with humility.

"I did not know," the rabbi continued, "that it would save us all. All I wanted to do was to fulfill one more Divine commandment in the last moments of life left to us. But God is merciful, and spared us all, so that we might live a good and holy life. Let us show our gratitude to God by obeying His commandments always, in times of safety as well as in times of danger, for we are always at His mercy."

Excerpted from The Complete Story of Tishrei, published and copyright by Kehot Publication Society, Brooklyn NY

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What is a rabbi?

A1. He is the leader of a Jewish community.

Q2. Why was the calming of the seas called a miracle?

A2. Because it was something that people did not expect. They thought it was a magical horn. But, all things are possible with God.

Q3. What does the story mean when it says the 'storm of the heart' is more powerful than the 'storm of the sea'?

A3. Each person is more powerful when his or her heart and intentions are centered in God.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Shofar ... the Rams Horn

Food: Traditional treat: eating apples dipped in honey, a symbol of the wish for a sweet new year.

Craft: Shofar

Materials:

Paper plate

Ribbon

Yarn

Stapler

Hole punch

Scissors

Directions:

Roll the plate to form a cone

Staple closed

Wrap the ribbon around the plate and staple

Punch a hole in each end of the plate

Tie the yarn (24 inches long) through the hole on each end of the 'horn'



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

We will look further into the Jewish calendar and the Jewish holy book, the Torah. The Jewish calendar is essentially composed of three units that depend on a heavenly body for proper calculation. The month is dependent upon cycles of the moon, and the day and the year are dependent upon cycles of the sun. For the purpose of our discussion, we will focus on the month and the year. (The following discussion is oversimplified for clarity's sake.)

<http://www.torah.org/learning/yomtov/assorted/calendarex.html>

The shofar is also called “The Shout of God’s Victory.” It is a ram’s horn that is often used as an instrument of warfare. For example, the Torah states, “When you go to war in your land against an adversary who is oppressing you, you are to sound an alarm with trumpets; then you will be remembered before the Lord your God and you will be saved from your enemies.” The shofar first appeared in the Torah in Exodus 19:16.

The Torah is the holy book used by the Jewish people. In its narrowest sense, Torah is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, sometimes called the Pentateuch or the Five Books of Moses. In its broadest sense, Torah is the entire body of Jewish teachings.

Tween & Teen Activity

Consider this part of the story:

The rabbi smiled as he answered, "No, my friend, it is not a magical horn, but a shofar, a simple ram's horn, which we Jews are commanded to sound on the solemn days of our New Year. It raises a storm in our hearts, which is mightier than the storm of the sea, for it calls us to return to God with humility.

"I did not know," the rabbi continued, "that it would save us all. All I wanted to do was to fulfill one more Divine commandment in the last moments of life left to us. But God is merciful, and spared us all, so that we might live a good and holy life. Let us show our gratitude to God by obeying His commandments always, in times of safety as well as in times of danger, for we are always at His mercy."

Small Group Discussion:

The Jews use the shofar during Rosh Hashanah to remember that God is always with us, guiding, guarding and protecting us.

In the last week or two, you have started the new school year.

1. What big events happen for you at the beginning of the school year? (i.e. sports, friends, car, job, etc.)
2. What events have come up or may come up that could be your 'storm of the sea'?
3. What symbol or sound could you take with you to remember 'the storm of the heart'?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

TALES FROM THE TORAH

Week #4: Illumination: The 10 Commandments – Metaphysical Interpretation

Teacher Notes: To end our month on Judaism, we will review the Laws brought to the Jews by Moses. We will be studying the Ten Commandments metaphysically. The interpretations are based upon “The Ten Commandments” by Emmet Fox. Find additional information at: <http://emmetfox.wwwhubs.com>. There is quite a bit of material supporting this unit. Please feel free to use as much or as little of it as fits into the needs of your community.

Main Message: There are two ways to look at the Ten Commandments: the biblical story, and the meaning behind the story. The Commandments are a study of ourselves. The first five reflect the inner world, spiritual world, world of thought, consciousness, and getting our thought correct. The second five refer to the outer world, objective side of life, our relationships with each other, how thought works, and the external plane of life.

- Moses brought the Ten Commandments to the Israelites.
- The Commandments are a study of ourselves.
- (For the teens and tweens) As soon as we can change our consciousness through scientific prayer, then we have the key to life.

Readings:

Exodus 20:20: Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid."

SOM Reading: 344-31: All mystics have seen this cosmic light. This is why it is said they were illumined. They have all had the same experience, whether it was Moses coming down from the mountain, [or] Jesus after the resurrection...

Lesson: The Story of Moses and the 10 Commandments:

Children's Version

In the information below, we are using the word God to be consistent with the Bible. But, understand that God is the eternal, divine spirit that resides in each and every one of us.

The Story of Moses and the 10 Commandments: Children's Version

The Israelites had been traveling in the desert for about 3 months (which is a little longer than regular summer holidays) when they came to Mount Sinai. They were going to stay there for a while plus they had excellent shelter from the mountain.

Moses unpacked and decided to walk up the mountain to talk to God. Remember that this wasn't very easy for Moses, he was already over 80 years old.

God knew that Moses was coming so He spoke to Moses and told him to tell the Israelites to get ready. Moses came down to tell the people to have a bath and to clean all their clothes. By doing this the people were getting prepared to hear important words from God. That is why we sometimes dress up or make sure we have clean clothes on when we go to church. It is

one way to show respect.

On the third morning after Moses had talked to God, the Israelites were busy making their breakfast when all of a sudden there was a large rumble and a flash of light over the mountain. Anyone who was still sleeping was startled and woke up suddenly.

Everyone went out to look and just over the mountain there was lightning and thunder, and a very thick cloud hung over the mountain so the top couldn't be seen. Even the mountain shook and the sound of trumpets could be heard getting louder and louder.

After that Moses went back up the mountain. But this time he stayed there for a long time (40 days and 40 nights). God wanted to instruct the people on how to live. By following His rules they would have less sadness in their lives. God just wanted to protect them.

It's just like when our parents give us rules to protect us. They ask us to look both ways before we cross the street, or to not hit our brother or sister. They give us rules because they love us and know what's best for us.

We'll talk about the Ten Commandments God told Moses. Remember as you hear each commandment that they are all equally important; one is not more meaningful than the other. The first commandment is to **put God first**. This means that nothing should be more important than God - a hobby you enjoy, television or video games, even your friends and family should not be more important than God.

The second command is to **remember the One Power**. Whenever we give power to anything but God, we are giving that thing more importance than it deserves. This could be good (money, friendship) or bad (anger, sadness) things. But there is only One Power and it is God. The third commandment reminds us to **respect God's Name**. You use the name of God whenever you believe in something. What you really believe in is your God. And so when you believe in limitation, you are saying God is limited. That is not respecting God. We cannot believe in something and not have it happen to us. If we only knew that, we would think more seriously about what we believe.

The fourth commandment reminds us to **find God in our silence**. The Sabbath is a state of mind that man enters or acquires when he goes into the silence of his own soul, into the realm of spirit. There he finds true rest and peace. The Sabbath is the consciousness that we have fulfilled the divine law in both thought and act.

The fifth commandment is to **respect your parents**. This commandment tells us to honor our father and mother but it is also telling us to recognize God as the only Cause, the only Presence, and the only Power. If we do this, our days shall have no troubles or difficulties.

The sixth commandment says **don't hurt others**. This of course means to not hurt other people, but it also reminds us not to hurt ourselves. This is true for our thoughts, our words and

our actions.

The seventh commandment is for those who are married. God tells us to be **faithful in marriage**. He wants us to love our wife or husband someday and treat them with respect. The eighth commandment is **don't steal**. This means that we shouldn't take something that doesn't belong to us.

The ninth commandment is **don't lie**. Don't tell lies about yourself or about other people. The last commandment is **don't envy others**. God has an infinite amount of everything and will be glad to give it to you when you have your thoughts, words and actions in alignment with your best self.

(Adapted from http://www.dltk-bible.com/exodus/moses_and_the_10_commands-cv.htm)

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why do we still talk about the Ten Commandments today?

A1. They are a wonderful list of reminders to help us live from a place of peace and joy, in alignment with our divine spirit.

Q2. What is the main message of the Ten Commandments?

A2. Our consciousness, (the thoughts we think that lead to our words and actions), is what create our lives. We can use scientific prayer (our Spiritual Mind Treatments) to change our consciousness if we wish.

Q3. Why is scientific prayer called the key to life?

A3. Because you can use scientific prayer to use the power in the universe (God, Spirit, Divine Truth – or any name you wish to give it).

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft:

:Craft: 10 Commandments
Handprints

Materials:

10 Commandment Template (below)
Finger paint
Scissors
Glue or tape

Directions:

Cut out each of the 10
Commandments.
Have the child color their hands and press the prints on a piece of paper (or cut out hand
prints).



10 Commandments Template



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Metaphysical Interpretation of the Ten Commandments

In the information below, we are using the word God to be consistent with the Bible. But, understand that God is the eternal, divine spirit that resides in each and every one of us.

Review the metaphysical understanding of each of the 10 Commandments.

#	Bible Statement	Metaphysical understanding	Youth Church
1	Thou shalt have no other Gods before me	There is nothing outside of yourself that has more power than God.	Put God First
2	Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image	Your evaluation of your circumstance is an excuse you use for your actions.	Remember the one power
3	Thou shalt not take the name of the lord thy God in vain	What we believe as the truth (God) will happen in our lives.	Respect God's name
4	Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy	Trust that God is present everywhere.	Find God in your silence
5	Honor thy father and thy mother	God as the only Cause, the only Presence, and the only Power.	Respect your parents
6	Thou shalt not kill	Nothing is destroyed from the outside.	Don't hurt others
7	Thou shalt not commit adultery	Giving power to outside things. Giving power to a false God.	Be faithful in marriage

8	Thou shalt not steal	No one can take what they do not have in consciousness.	Don't steal
9	Thou shalt not bear false witness	Do not tell lies about people because whatever you say about another person will happen to you.	Don't lie
10	Thou shalt not covet	God has an infinite amount of everything and will shower it upon you as your thoughts, words and actions are in alignment with your best self.	Don't envy others

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Tween & Teen Activity

Metaphysical Interpretation of the Ten Commandments

In the information below, we are using the word God to be consistent with the Bible. But, understand that God is the eternal, divine spirit that resides in each and every one of you.

Have the teens meet in small groups to review the questions at the end of each of the commandments about how they use the commandments in their lives.

1. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

This is the first commandment, and you know that always the beginning is half the battle. Always try to make a good beginning, and if you do not, scrap things and start again. All our troubles arise from breaking the first commandment, because it sums up the ten. There is not a single mistake that you or I have ever made that has not come directly through breaking this commandment and giving some outside passing thing too much power and thus give power to the manifestation. So when you let yourself be scared by the front page of the newspaper, or by what is happening in the stock market, whether it is going up or down, you are bowing down and worshipping an idol.

What external event do I let have power over my thoughts and actions?

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Whenever we give power to anything but God, we are making that thing into a graven image, even though it is not a palpable image of wood or stone. We give power to our ailments, particularly if it is a favorite ailment, like “my knee” or “my upset stomach.” We are making graven image of these things. We are giving them power and we cannot heal them. It is only when we take power away from them that we can heal them. Ernest Holmes said, “There is a power in the universe and you can use it.” Do not give power to your interpretations of circumstances in your life. Instead, know the truth that there is only God and God is only good.

What is my graven image? What am I giving power to? What action do I want to take?

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the lord thy God in vain.

Actually, you use the name of God whenever you believe in something. What you really believe in is your God. So when you believe in limitation, you are saying God is limited. We cannot take the name of the Lord in vain. We cannot believe in something and not have it happen to us. If we only knew that what we really believe will happen to us, we would think more seriously about what we believe.

Do I take the name of the Lord my God in vain? How does it show up in my life?

4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

This commandment was given to the people at the time they were leaving Egypt and going into the desert. On the surface it meant what it said for that age. It was a wonderful thing in Moses' day to insist that everybody set aside one day a week to think about God and about religion, or at least oblige him to stop his secular activities.

Now we know the Sabbath is the consciousness that we have fulfilled the divine law in both thought and act. The Sabbath of the Lord has nothing to do with any day of the week. It is a state of mind that man enters or acquires when he goes into the silence of his own soul, into the realm of spirit. There he finds true rest and peace. The seventh day means the perfect stage of one's spiritual unfoldment.

When we analyze the commandments, they are instructions in metaphysical truth and scientific prayer. By scientific prayer we mean seeing the presence of God everywhere, particularly where the error seems to be and building up the right thought about it. To accomplish any work you need a Sabbath day. If you cannot let a thing alone when you have done it, it cannot grow. Remember the story of the child who plants a bulb and digs it up every day to see how it is getting along? Of course, there will be no flower.

It is true in prayer and in any kind of healing. There is a time for work and there is a time for rest. I know not how many people there are in this metaphysical movement who miss their demonstration because they are praying so hard and so constantly that there is no Sabbath. God is present everywhere, and that is the meaning of the Sabbath day in its deepest sense. For those who understand the metaphysical teaching, it is always the Sabbath day and the place whereon they stand is holy ground.

Am I taking my Sabbath? Am I releasing my treatments?

5. Honor thy father and thy mother.

We are taking a very wide and, I think, a very profound view of the commandments as Moses intended them to be taken. Of course, it is true that you should respect your parents, so you must honor your parents, but that is just the very outer husk of the commandments. Underneath, it is instruction in divine metaphysics and prayer because your real father and mother is God.

So this commandment brings in two poles, the male and the female, and when it tells us to honor our father and mother, it is telling us to recognize God as the only Cause, the only Presence, and the only Power. If we do this, our days shall have no troubles or difficulties.

What meaning does this have for me? Am I honoring my father and my mother?

6. Thou shalt not kill.

I have said two or three times that the commandments are to be taken at their face value and that they are binding as such, but that is only the beginning.

So the commandment, Thou shalt not kill, is really fundamentally an expression of the cosmic law that you cannot kill, and the sooner you find out, the better. We are always trying to kill, not people of course, we leave that to gangsters. At least we do not kill people suddenly although some do try to kill others slowly. Nothing ever dies from the outside. No one can kill you. No one can kill your character. No one can kill your peace of mind, business, reputation or anything that is yours. You can, but nobody else can. Nothing is destroyed from the outside.

However, you can destroy yourself. If you are going out into the world and being very foolish and making stupid mistakes, neglecting your work, being dishonest or unreliable, or if you are going to forget God, then you will come to grief. I know not how many people waste their lives in thinking how they are being hurt, or damaged, or injured by other people, how they are kept back because other people are against them. How good they could be, and the marvelous things they could do, if it were not for others. It is a kind of self-drugging. So long as people believe that they get nowhere, they cannot progress. As soon as they know nobody can hurt them, they are free to overtake any mistakes and to be and do the thing they want. This is inner metaphysical meaning.

Have I been holding on to 'hurts' and/or dumping my hurts on others? How much of my life am I wasting?

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Naturally that commandment means what it says. The Christian standard of conduct with regard to personal purity will never be improved on. That is the standard which has been taught by all the older Christian churches without exception. The fundamental idea behind this commandment is to have One God. As you read through the Old Testament, the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, or any of the major prophets, you will find that the idea of an adulterous woman who is unfaithful to her husband constantly means the human soul which is turning away to some other God. In those days it meant running after one of the heathen Egyptian or other Gods. Today it means giving power to outside things, saying, "Well now, prayer will not overcome this because of thus and so." That is giving power to a false God. I cannot do things because I am too old, or I haven't got money or influence, or I can't live in this climate, or whatever it might be, is the modern form which unfaithfulness to God will take.

What am I giving power to? How unfaithful am I to God? And how does that show up in my experiences?

8. Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not steal really means thou cannot steal. You may say, I know people who have done so. No, you may know someone who broke into your house and took your silver, or when you hung up your coat in a restaurant someone took your wallet out of your pocket, but did they steal? They tried, but did they succeed? No, the person who took ten dollars out of your pocket will not get away with it. The burglar who took your silver actually transferred some silver from your house to someone else's house, but did he get away with it? He did not. If that silver belongs to you by right of consciousness all the burglars in the world could not have taken it away, and if you had the understanding of the presence of God in all men, no one could have taken your wallet.

To try to get something without having the consciousness to which it belongs is really mental theft. Stealing is trying to get something for which we do not have the consciousness, and are therefore not spiritually entitled to. You may be the most respectable person in the church, so much so that you wouldn't dream of stealing a thing. But you may be trying to steal credit that does not belong to you. You may be pretending to be very learned without learning. You may be pretending to be very rich when you are nearly broke.

Then there are other people who do not care about money, but they are snobs. They think a

person with a high position in the world is better than a person with a lower position. They would like to be high up in the world so they pretend to have some social importance which they do not have. We try to enjoy a spiritual success that we do not have the consciousness for. You cannot do anything that is not in accordance with your consciousness, at the moment, but you can change your consciousness. You can go to work and change your consciousness through scientific prayer. Is not that the real object of the metaphysical teachings? As soon as we can change our consciousness through scientific prayer, then we have the key to life.

Am I expanding my consciousness?

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.

I am not sure but that this comment is the most important of all the commandments when we properly understand it. The obvious meaning is important, but only the beginning, do not tell lies about people. We have to apply this principle throughout our lives. It is very important in practice because whatever we say about another person will happen to ourselves. As long as we are demonstrating or expressing limited bodies, sickness, and what we call middle age or old age, we are in possession of anything but perfect health.

We must review all our ideas. This is being true witness and when we bear true witness to our neighbor of what we are, we change him as well. No one person can regenerate without helping the whole world to some extent. This is the truth about you. You are a divine being and perfect. You were never born and you will never die. You are one with God and potentially you express every quality of God. When we really know these things, we shall be bearing true witness.

Where am I bearing false witness? What does it look like when I am a true witness?

10. Thou shalt not covet.

This is different than stealing, it is wanting something to which one is not entitled. Jealousy or envy is covetousness. When we look at some other man or woman and we wish that we had something which is theirs, to which we are not entitled in justice, we are coveting, and that is terribly bad for us, and Moses knew it. Moses, I think, knew more about the human heart than anyone who has ever lived except Jesus.

If you see something that somebody else has and you like it and you think you would like to

have the same, that is fine. But do not take it away from him and do not hate him because he has it and you have not. As a matter of fact, no one has anything that does not come direct from God. God's supply is infinite, and the very thing that your neighbor has, God has an infinite amount of and will be glad to give it to you if you will furnish the consciousness through which it can appear.

Countries do this ... we have oil,, other people need it and covet it, or rubber, tin, or what you please – so they invade a country to get them.

Coveting leads to aggressions, theft, murder, but that is not the worst of it. The worst of it is that it affects the soul of Man. Even if coveting never leads you to take anything that does not belong to you, it undermines and ultimately rots your soul. It shuts you off from God because to covet something means that you do not understand the law of being. You do not understand you cannot steal, that whatever you are getting or lacking is the out picturing of the expression of your consciousness.

What have I been coveting? Do I see I can have what I covet, I can be happy for the other person and go forth and accept it for myself.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #10: Creative Play

This month's lessons focus on the joy found in life. October's theme explores how imagination and creative play are an important part of many of the world's religions. Laughing, dancing and song are an important part of Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish and Christian celebration. Children in creative play! We end the month of October by partnering with Unicef(™).

Week #1: The Laughing Buddha

Week #2: Dance: Expressing Joy

Week #3: Music: The Sound of Spirit

Week #4: Halloween: Children Helping Children



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

CREATIVE PLAY

Week #1: The Laughing Buddha

Teacher Notes: October's theme explores how imagination and creative play are an important part of many of the world's religions. The Budai, or Laughing Buddha, reminds us to treat ourselves and others with a tolerant, peaceful heart. Today we use this symbol to look at the Truth, how to become the greatest person in the world through doing our best within our means; and how everyone can be the greatest person in the world, all at the same time. More information can be found at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budai>

Main Message: The laughing Buddha reminds us that to be happy we need to have a loving heart. A big heart gives you tolerance. It helps you to greet each day with joy and all people with gladness. It helps you to tolerate a great many things with a big happy smile that reaches your eyes and your heart.

- The laughing Buddha reminds us to greet each day with joy and all people with tolerance.
- Our best is not measured against other people, but against ourselves.

Readings:

“When you realize how perfect everything is, you will tilt your head back and laugh at the sky.”
~Buddha

SOM Reading: 243:21: You are sending out only thoughts of peace, love and joy, and no irritating thought or thing can come back to annoy or obstruct the perfect functioning of every organ of your body. The passages of your mind are open only to the inflow and the outflow of good. You are sensitive only to good, dwelling in the higher altitudes of consciousness, understanding Life in Its spiritual purpose, experiencing exhilaration, vitalization, and exaltation.

Lesson: The Laughing Buddha

Have you ever seen a ceramic statue of the Buddha, perhaps in a Chinese restaurant, or for sale in a store, or in your home or garden? Have you ever wondered why the Buddha is laughing?

The laughing Buddha reminds us that to be happy we need to have a loving heart. A big heart gives you tolerance. It helps you to greet each day with joy and all people with gladness. It helps you to tolerate a great many things with a big happy smile that reaches your eyes and your heart.

Buddha says that the best way to solve a problem we might have with someone else is to have a warm and loving heart. By not being resentful, by not bearing grudges, only then are we able to smile like the Buddha - only then can we be truly happy.

How to become the Greatest Person in the World -

Buddhism teaches that being the greatest is an absolute achievement free of comparison. What does that mean? It means that to be the greatest is not an achievement that can be attained through competition. You can't win greatness - but you can achieve it. That means everyone can be the greatest.

Here's an example: For a healthy ant to successfully carry one grain of rice is a great achievement. For a healthy horse to successfully carry one grain of rice is not all that terrific. The ant has put his best effort into his job. It has fulfilled its purpose as an ant. When this truth is achieved, the ant is no longer just an ant. The ant has moved into the realm of Truth - it has become the greatest ant in the world.

Buddhism teaches that a person is successful not because he or she is better than someone else, and not because they received a higher grade on a test or won a Gold Medal at the Olympics, or beat out other ants to see who could carry the biggest and heaviest grain of rice. True achievement does not come from competition or comparison. A person (or an ant, or a horse) is successful because he or she has given their best within their means. For this reason, every single person can become the greatest person in the world, all at the same time.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why is Buddha laughing?

A1. He has no fear or anger because he treats others and himself with kindness in all situations.

Q2. What does 'tolerance for others' mean?

A2. Knowing that the thoughts and actions of other people cannot change who we are.

Q3. How can you be the greatest person in the world?

A3. By doing your best based upon what YOU can do, not what others can do.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: To help the children remember the story of how carrying a grain of sand is a large accomplishment for an ant, while it wouldn't be for a horse.

Craft: Thumbprint ant

Materials:

Ink for thumbprints
Construction paper
Pen
Glue
Rice

Directions:

Have the children place their thumbs in the ink and put their thumbprint on a piece of paper. Draw legs, an eye and a nose to make the thumbprint an ant. To give the craft more meaning, glue a few grains of rice above the thumbprint.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

The Dalai Lama said, “In the practice of tolerance, one’s enemy is the best teacher.” Note: The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. He frequently states that his life is guided by three major commitments: the promotion of basic human values or secular ethics in the interest of human happiness, the fostering of inter-religious harmony and the preservation of Tibet’s Buddhist culture, a culture of peace and non-violence.

How can our enemies be our greatest teachers? We expect the best from our friends. When our enemies treat us with respect and love, we see the truth of Divine Love.

Tuan and his neighbor

Once upon a time, there lived a farmer who had a little land. His name was Tuan and he was a very kind and good-natured person. He lived in a hut on his land with his wife and children and sold whatever crops he could produce on his small land.

Tuan loved to help others. Whenever someone fell ill or needed something badly, Tuan was there to help that person. If someone died in the village, Tuan assisted the family members of the deceased person in whichever way he could. If anyone fell ill at night, Tuan was right beside the village doctor to help him prepare the medicines and tend to the sick. He appeared to be loved by one and all.

But there was one person who hated Tuan with all his heart. He was Juan, a neighbor of Tuan, who lived on the land next to him. A lazy person by nature, Juan hardly put in as much effort to cultivate his land as Tuan did to produce crops of his own. So when the harvest season arrived every year, Juan found that he had very few crops to sell. Tuan on the other hand, earned a handsome profit through the selling of his produce.

One year, Juan could no longer contain his jealousy. Just days before Tuan was to reap his harvest, Juan set fire to his crops at night. Tuan was asleep at this time and it was only the alertness of one of his other neighbors that saved much of his crops from being perished in the deadly flames of the fire that Juan had lighted.

When the flames were doused, Tuan saw which direction the fire had started from. Juan's animosity toward him was unknown to Tuan. But he let the matters rest and decided to take action only if he saw Juan repeating his dastardly act once again.

That year, Tuan managed to sell the rest of his crops at a good price but he could not make much profit for a good part of his produce had been burnt. He had a heavy heart but he did not like to tell anyone about it.

Only days later, Tuan was awakened by the sound of lamentations. He went out to find a crowd beside Juan's hut. He rushed to find that Juan's son had fallen ill. He found that the village doctor was unable to provide a cure to his illness. Tuan knew what he had to do. He untied his own horse and rode it. Then he rushed to the town that was ten miles away and fetched a more experienced doctor who lived there.

This doctor was able to guess the disease correctly and provided an exact cure for it. Within hours, the boy was found to sleep soundly and Tuan went with the doctor to take him back to the town.

A day later, Juan went to Tuan's hut and began to weep bitterly. He confessed to his sins but was surprised when Tuan told him that he knew about it all.

"You knew that I had set fire to your crops? And still you fetched the doctor for my son?" asked the astonished Juan.

Tuan nodded and said, "I did what I knew was right. Could I do wrong just because you had done so?"

Juan stood up and embraced Tuan. Both men were in tears and so were the others who stood by them.

From that day, Juan changed himself. Within a year, he could produce many crops on his land through his hard work. When the others asked him how he had changed so much, he only replied,

"It was the goodness and love of Tuan that transformed me."

From: www.kidsgen.com

Tween & Teen Activity

The Laughing Game:

The Laughing Game symbolizes the power of laughter.

Lie in a circle with your head on the stomach of the person beside you. Start with the first person who laughs once, “ha.” The second person laughs twice, “ha ha,” the third person laughs three times, “ha ha ha,” and so on.



The object is to see how many “ha’s” your group can reach before someone breaks out in laughter.

Large group sharing: How is this important in your life? Every energy is contagious; whether it is laughter, anger, resentment or love. What experiences have you had where anger or resentment can be turned to the energy of laughter and love?



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CREATIVE PLAY

Week #2: Dance: Expressing Joy

Teacher Notes: For many religions, dance is used to expand internal spiritual awareness. The dances we will see were not originally intended for entertainment but performances are sometimes given. For background information on the dances we will review, visit:

Muslim: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dervish>

Jewish: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hora_\(dance\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hora_(dance))

Native American: <http://www.powwows.com/category/articles/powwow/dancing/#>

Main Message: Many religions and cultures use sacred dance as a way to get closer to Spirit or God. Some Muslims perform the Whirling Dervish. Many Jews dance the Horah. The Native Americans use dance in many ceremonies. While the dances are fun to watch and participate in, they are a sacred and important ceremony.

- Dance ceremonies are sacred and a form of prayer.
- Joy and love of spirit shines through in dance.

Readings:

"Great dancers are not great because of their technique. They are great because of their passion." - Unknown

SOM Reading: 190:21: There is no question that people throughout the ages have been healed through prayer and faith, that they have mentally contacted a healing Law, in this spiritual Universe of Law and Order. How did they contact this Law? All prayer is mental, being a certain mental attitude, a certain way of thinking, a certain way of believing, an uplifting process, a belief in God. Some prayers fall short of this state, while others reach a state of spiritual awareness.

Lesson: (Watch all or some of the videos depending on your time)

The Sufi Muslims perform the Whirling Dervish
They do the dance to heal humanity.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_Cf-ZxDfZA

Many Jews celebrate with the Horah. The Horah is performed at Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs (coming of age ceremonies for boys and girls) and at weddings.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmY2s5U4D1M>

Practice the Horah: To start the dance, everybody forms a circle, holding hands, and steps forward toward the right with the left foot, then follows with the right foot. The left foot is then brought back, followed by the right foot. This is done while holding hands and circling together in a fast and cheerful motion to the right.

Native American Dance Ceremony. Many rituals and ceremonies for Native Americans include colorful dress and dance. Dance is one of the most beautiful parts of Native American culture.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-600Aqrxe0>

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What does it mean to dance to be closer to God?

A1. Like meditation, dance is a way to clear the mind and enter a place of connection with Spirit.

Q2. What do the dancers do that is similar?

A2. Much practice and study is needed to learn and perfect the dance as well as the meaning of the dance.

Q3. When do you use dance in your life to celebrate?

A3. We dance at weddings, parties, joyous events.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: The Spinning Top represents the movement of different traditions connecting with spirit through dance.

Craft: Spinning Top

Materials:

Plastic bottle caps

Toothpicks or wooden skewers or thin straws

Awl from the toolbox or nail and hammer to put hole in bottle cap

Small wooden bead

Scissors

Optional: markers, stickers or paint to decorate

Directions:

Have an adult make the hole in the center of the bottle cap right in the middle of the lid using a drill, hammer and nail or an awl.

Enlarge the hold if needed for the toothpick or skewer or straw.

Thread a bead through the straw on the top of the bottle cap and secure with glue.
Try it out!



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

"You've gotta' dance like there's nobody watching,
Love like you'll never be hurt,
Sing like there's nobody listening,
And live like it's heaven on earth.
(And speak from the heart to be heard.)"
—William W. Purkey

When I was a young man my daddy told me
A lesson he learned, it was a long time ago.
If you want to have someone to hold onto
You're gonna have to learn to let go.

Chorus
You got to sing like you don't need the money
Love like you'll never get hurt.
You got to dance like nobody's watchin'
It's gotta come from the heart if you want it to work.

Now here is the one thing that I keep forgetting
When everything is falling apart.
In life as in love, what I need to remember
There's such a thing as trying too hard.

What does it mean to “Dance like there’s nobody is watching”?

Activity: As a group, do one dance to the song.
Then, have everyone close their eyes and dance like there is nobody watching.

Tween & Teen Activity

The Sacred/Circle Dance (Summarized from Sacred Dance and Spirituality by Lynn Thomas)

Dance has been used over the ages as an expression of the deepest aspects of life, of the dancer's relationship with the Earth, the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and, perhaps most importantly, the connection with the Divine. However, many of us do not use dance in this way.

There is a form of dance that is becoming more and more popular which recaptures some of the spirituality of dance. It is the Sacred/Circle Dance. We all dance in a circle holding hands, so that the intention is for everyone to do the same steps. There is no separation in the circle. All participants are equal. We achieve a common spirit with one another and a sense of unity is a powerful experience. In the dance we are united, yet we retain our uniqueness; we are each a part of the integrated whole while maintaining our individual integrity. This is a direct expression in form of the nature of our association with each other on this planet and with Divinity.

We all attempt to dance the same steps, yet it is the flow of the movement which is so vital. This reminds me of the story of a Sacred Dance teacher leading a large group of people in a few dances many years ago. Some of those attending did not want to participate. Of the on-lookers one was heard saying to her neighbor, "I don't know what's sacred about this. They look as though they are enjoying themselves to me." It seems as if religion, spirituality and sacredness have become synonymous with dullness, seriousness and heaviness. Yet surely there are many things to celebrate and life was not meant to be all hard toil and no joy. "Life is for living" as the saying goes and what better way to express that life than in dance.

The Dance

In the circle we hold hands with one palm up and the other down. This allows the energy to flow right around the circle from person to person. We are continually exchanging energy and there have been many instances of the healing effect of this.

Activity:

Break the teens into 2 or 3 groups (depending on how many you have) to create some simple dance steps. One at a time, have the groups teach their dance to the whole. Be sure to bring some appropriate music to play!



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

CREATIVE PLAY

Week #3: Music: The Sound of Spirit

Teacher Notes: Music is one of our most powerful gateways to connect to our spiritual nature -- our divine source -- the unseen, as well as to the universe around us and those other divine beings that inhabit it with us. I know of no other medium that can transport us as immediately, on all levels of our existence, beyond the limits of our intellect and physical body to a higher, often blissful and inexplicable state. Music has the unique ability to transform us independently of our thinking mind, to a place uninhibited by the judgments, doubts and fears that too often dictate the narration of our thoughts and self-limiting beliefs. This week, for the older children, we include the study of Dr. Masaru Emoto's work on how music affects the molecular structure of water. <http://www.masaru-emoto.net/english/water-crystal.html>

Main Message: Music is used to touch, heal and inspire. Music joyfully connects hearts to spirit and community. Music is the sound of spirit. Nearly all known religions of the world include music in their expressions and rituals.

- Music surrounds our lives.
- We feel spirit through music.

Readings:

"There are certain things that have universal attributes, like music. Something of greater magnitude is conveyed by them. They connect us with the universal storehouse of life and knowledge." ~ Swami Paramananda

SOM Reading:.328:21: The greatest music ever composed was written by the hand of a mystic, and the highest and best in art has come from men of spiritual perception.

Lesson: Sacred Dance

What would our lives be like without music? In today's lesson, we consciously acknowledge our appreciation for music.

When we feel spirit, we feel it in our hearts. Let's experience that now.

Recite the words to Surely the Presence without music:

*Surely the presence of God is in this place
I can feel the mighty power, and the grace
I can hear the brush of angel wings
I see glory on each face
Surely the presence of God is in this place*

Then, sing it as a group

Recite/read the words to "Imagine" by John Lennon

*Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try*

*No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today...*

*Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace...*

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one*

*Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world...*

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one*

Then, listen to the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRhq-yO1KN8>

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Where do you have music in your life?

A1. Parents singing lullabies to babies, listening and singing along with the car radio, in church, at school, playing instruments/piano, etc.

Q2. How did it feel to recite the words vs. singing with the music?

A2. Without the music, the song was flat and dull. With the music, I felt emotion and opening in my heart.

Q3. Why do we call music the sound of spirit?

A3. We are one with spirit and always present. Music lets us immediately jump to a place where we feel spirit in our hearts.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Make a joyful noise!

Craft: Kazoo

Materials:

Toilet paper tube

Wax paper

Rubber band

Directions:

Decorate the toilet paper tube.

Cut out a circle from wax paper, about 4" in diameter and cover the top of the tube, securing it with a rubber band.



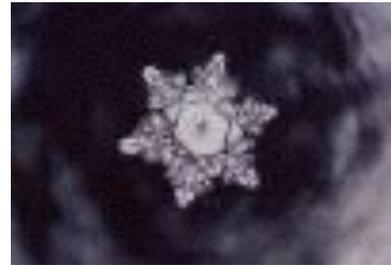
Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Did you know that the human body is 70% water?

One way to observe water is in its many forms. Liquid, frozen, crystals. Snowflakes are water crystals. We know they are each unique and can be very abundant.

A Japanese scientist, Dr. Masaru Emoto, has found that water crystals respond to their environment. If snowflakes (water crystals) are made from water that has been prayed over, or played music to, it looks different.

This is a water crystal from a pure mineral spring at Mt. Shasta in the US. You can see it is a beautiful, symmetrical, detailed design.



Let's take a look at how different crystals look when they are exposed to different music.



Amazing Grace John Lennon



Mozart



Heavy Metal

Questions:

1. Why do you think the water crystals look different with different music?
2. What could it mean to each of us since our bodies are 90% water?

Tween & Teen Activity

What we see, hear and taste affects our thoughts and bodies. Every day, we are making choices about how we want to live our lives. What if we could see how our choices physically affect us? We all learn valuable life lessons at our own pace, but there is one basic truth we all learn early. Positive, compassionate words comfort and heal; and negative words and insults hurt. Until recently, we knew this only because we could feel it. Now we can actually see it.

Thanks to the experimental work of Dr. Masaru Emoto, we can look to water, and its frozen crystals, to confirm the healing power of beautiful music, positive thinking, uplifting speech and prayer. Dr. Emoto is a Japanese scientist who studies water at the molecular level and found that when water is in the frozen crystal form (like snowflakes), water showed us its true nature. He has shown that water not only reflects the physical word around it (as when we use a placid lake or pond as a mirror), but it also reflects the consciousness of the being surrounding it. He has gained worldwide acclaim through his groundbreaking research and discovery, that water is deeply connected to our individual and collective consciousness

Dr. Emoto: “At first, we strenuously observed crystals of tap water, river water, and lake water. From the tap water we could not get any beautiful crystals. We could not get any beautiful ones from rivers and lakes near big cities, either. However, from the water from rivers and lakes where water is kept pristine from development, we could observe beautiful crystals with each one having its own uniqueness.

The result was that we always observed beautiful crystals after giving good words, playing good music, and showing, playing, or offering pure prayer to water. On the other hand, we observed disfigured crystals in the opposite situation.”



Amazing Grace John Lennon



Mozart



Heavy Metal

Activity: Break into small groups and discuss the implications of what Dr. Emoto discovered.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

CREATIVE PLAY

Week #4: Halloween: Children Helping Children

Teacher Notes: The story of Trick or Treat for UNICEF is powerful on many levels. It is a way for children to think about others in need during the holiday, and a shining example of how one person can have a huge impact on the world. The story of Rev. Clyde Allison's wife saying, "It's too bad we can't turn this into something good," launched a program that has helped cut children's deaths by 40%. Today, UNICEF has provided clean water to 10 million people in Syria. This is the power of imagination at work. We encourage you to order kits early to give to your kids. Visit: <http://www.trickortreatforunicef.org/order>

Main Message: A thought. An idea. An inspiration. One person, one child, each of us has an impact on the world around us. At this time of play and fun, we also look to helping others. Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF helps provide kids in need with health care, clean water, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more. What a beautiful world this is!

- What you can imagine, you can create.
- Halloween can be more than just about candy.

Readings:

"How wonderful that no one need wait a single moment to improve the world."
~ Anne Frank

SOM Reading 456:3¹: We must become as little children. How we long for a return of that simple trust in life which children have; in their minds there are no doubts... The life of the child is lived in natural goodness. God is natural goodness. ... We must return the way we came. As little children, who know that life is good and to be trusted, we are to approach our problems as though they were not. Approaching them in this manner, they will vanish.

Lesson: One Thought ... Big Impact

One idea can change the world.

One Halloween night, the Reverend Clyde Allison and his wife Mary Emma experienced mixed emotions as they handed out candy to a parade of trick-or-treaters. "It's too bad we can't turn this into something good," said Mary Emma. "We can," replied Clyde.

Soon Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF was born, and it grew into one of America's most successful youth initiatives. The campaign has changed over the years, but its reasons for being remain constant: make Halloween meaningful by helping children discover their ability to help others.

Over the years, presidents, movie stars, authors, cartoon characters and thousands and thousands of kids have been part of Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF.

<http://www.unicefusa.org/supporters/celebrities>

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why do we collect money to give to others?

A1. We have so much to share, our talents and our treasures.

Q2. What does UNICEF do with the money?

A2. They give children things that they need to live a healthy, happy life: Fresh water, schooling and health care.

Q3. Why do we call it Children Helping Children?

A3. There are many ways that we can help others. This is one idea to use the experience of going to all of our neighbors doors and receiving candy, as also a way to give something back.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Kids helping Kids

Craft: UNICEF Box

Materials:

Order materials from

<http://schools.trickortreatforunicef.org/order/organizations>

KIT CONTENTS

Every Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF kit comes complete with:

Collection Boxes

Stickers

Posters

Donation Form

Reply Envelope

This year Unicef materials can be downloaded.

Celebrate Halloween in any way that works for your classroom.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

One person. One idea.

UNICEF was created from an idea from one person. Today, UNICEF is active in more than 190 countries and territories, working to give children a chance to survive, learn and grow into healthy adults.

Just imagine:

Clean water saves lives.

Water is life. When water is unsafe and sanitation non-existent, water can kill. Globally, waterborne illnesses are the second leading cause of death for children under five, killing 1,400 children every day.

UNICEF works in more than 100 countries to improve access to safe water and sanitation facilities. Whether by restoring access to clean water after a disaster or promoting safe hygiene practices in schools and communities, UNICEF is on the ground helping children in need. Since 1990, thanks to the work of UNICEF and its partners, more than 2.1 billion people have gained access to clean drinking water. Watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-G3BfoSK6GM>

Questions:

What do you think of the UNICEF idea?

Do you have any ideas about helping others?

Tween & Teen Activity

This week we talk about Children Helping Children.

Around the world there are 150 million orphans. 650,000 orphans live in Nepal. Many of these children are forced to become caretakers of their younger siblings. 13-year-old Nirmala, for example, works long days to provide for her younger brother and sister. Still, she dreams of getting an education herself.

Hunger is a real problem in Nepal with half of all children suffering from malnutrition. Parentless children are among the most vulnerable.

UNICEF is working in Nepal to provide children like Nirmala and her siblings with the support they need and hope for a brighter future. When you Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF, you are helping bring the essentials of life to the children most in need.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jjZnoLN3oo&feature=player_embedded

Large Group Discussion:

The goal of UNICEF is to have ZERO children die of things that can be prevented. How does that goal feel to you?

Do you have ideas of how to help others? Everything helps. Discuss how the idea of one family in Pennsylvania had such an impact around the world.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #11: Muslim Foundations

November's theme is Muslim Foundations: Prayer, Truthfulness, Piousness and Generosity. Islam has many different factions but we are focusing on the foundations that are beloved throughout the Muslim world. We will use stories from the Sahih al-Bukari which have been shared with children for generations. Remember these sacred stories are important in the Islam religion and should be treated with dignity. To acknowledge their importance, the Muslims say "Peace Be Unto Him." "Him" is the prophet Muhammad or Allah (God). Since God is one, it is also a blessing unto ourselves.

Week #1: Prayer

Week #2: Truthfulness

Week #3: Piousness

Week #4: Generosity



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

MUSLIM FOUNDATION

Week #1: Prayer

Teacher's Notes: Muslims believe one should live righteously and with much prayer. This is true for all of us. Much of this month's lessons was taken from "The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook."

More can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qam2q4X-Ue0>.

Main Message: This month's stories come from the Sahih al-Bukhari. This collection is one of the six major 'hadiths,' the stories denoting the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad in Sunni Islam. The hadith is generally accepted by Muslims as a secondary source of Islamic law after the Quran. These prophetic traditions were collected by a Muslim scholar after being transmitted orally for generations. The book covers almost all aspects of life in providing proper guidance of Islam such as the method of performing prayers and other actions of worship. These virtues are derived from the Five Pillars of Islam: 1. Declaration of Faith (Shahadah), 2. Prayer (Salat), 3. Charity (Zakat), 4. Fasting (Sawm/Ramadan), 5. Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahih_al-Bukhari

- Muslims have 5 required prayers each day. The purpose is to show gratitude for God, parents, our blessings and to help us feel better. It takes effort but is worth it.
- Effort is important, but knowing where to make an effort in your life makes all the difference.
- Prayer is an important part of remembering our connection to Spirit/God/Allah.

Readings:

There is no compulsion in matter of faith. Distinct is the way of guidance now from error. He who turns away from the forces of evil and believes in God, will surely hold fast to a handle that is strong and unbreakable, for God hears all and knows everything. – Quran, 2:256

SOM Reading: 149:41: It would be difficult to believe in a God who cares more for one person than another. There can be no God who is kindly disposed one day and cruel the next; there can be no God who creates us with tendencies and impulses we can scarcely comprehend, and then eternally punishes us when we make mistakes. God is a Universal Presence, an impersonal Observer, a Divine and impartial Giver, forever pouring Himself into His Creation.

Lesson: Giant Ship Engine that Failed

The following is an incident about an engine failure in a giant ship. The ship's owners tried one expert after another, but none of them could figure out how to fix the engine. Then they brought in an old man who had been fixing ships since he was a youngster. He carried a large bag of tools with him, and when he arrived, he immediately went to work. He inspected the engine very carefully, top to bottom.

Two of the ship's owners were there, watching this man, hoping he would know what to do. After looking things over, the old man reached into his bag and pulled out a small hammer. He gently tapped something. Instantly, the engine lurched into life. He carefully put his hammer away. The engine was fixed! A week later, the owners received a bill from the old man for ten thousand dollars.

"What?" the owners exclaimed. "He hardly did anything!"

So they wrote the old man a note saying, "Please send us an itemized bill."

The man sent a bill that read:

Tapping with a hammer: \$ 2.00

Knowing where to tap: \$ 9998.00

Effort is important, but knowing where to make an effort in your life makes all the difference.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. There is a saying in Science of Mind to 'treat and move our feet.' What does this mean?

A1. That prayer is important and also the effort to set the result in motion.

Q2. Why is it important to put effort into prayer?

A2. Our relationship with God and ourselves is the most important relationship in our life. Prayer is the way we connect and communicate with our spiritual selves.

Q3. Can you become an expert at prayer?

A3. Prayer is ever evolving for each of us but when you look at any challenging circumstances from your spiritual side, i.e. I know God is good, you are putting prayer/ God/yourself first.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Activities: Muslim's pray on a clean surface or rug. This simple craft symbolizes a woven prayer rug.

Craft: Prayer Mat

Materials:

Construction paper (different colors)

Scissors

Directions:

Fold one sheet of construction paper in half and cut from the folded edge to leave about a 1 inch margin on the other side. Repeat cuts about 1 inch apart. Unfold and cut the other contrasting color of construction paper into 1 inch strips to be woven. Trim excess strips with scissors.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

(From The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook)

American Muslim teens were asked if they pray. Some responses:

Samiah, age 11, Arizona: "I do pray every Maghirib prayer in the month of Ramadan and when we go to special prayers for funerals. I don't pray five times a day all the time, because I haven't memorized some parts, but I plan to memorize them soon."

Amira, age 16, Ohio: "Yes, I do pray a minimum of five times a day. If I'm feeling particularly happy or sad that day, I'll do extra."

Sumbul, age 14, Illinois: "It's really weird, I have months when I seriously won't miss a single prayer. And then there will be times when I'll miss two or three prayers all together. Isha and Fajr are the hardest, but I feel the best after praying them."

Anonymous, age 14: "Yes. I miss a few daily only because I am so lazy, but I try to make them up."

Questions:

Q1. How are you the same as Muslim teens when we pray?

Q2. How are you different?

Tween & Teen Activity

How to Pray: A step-by-step guide

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzRmpPGEb6Q>

As Muslims are due to perform prayers 5 (five) times a day, which is one of the important pillars of Islam and thus one can understand why is it important to learn how to pray in the most recommended and right way.

Watch this video and learn how to pray in the right way!



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

MUSLIM FOUNDATION

Week #2: Truthfulness

Teacher's Notes: The Prophet Muhammad can bring up powerful feelings by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. A great overview of what historians have said about Muhammad can be found at: http://www.prophetofislam.com/what_do_others_say.php. The story we use today is well known and originated in the Sahih al-Bukari, a collection of stories handed down through the generations and generally accepted by Muslims as Islamic law.

Main Message: November's theme is Muslim Foundations: Prayer, Truthfulness, Piousness and Generosity. Islam is the name given to the message revealed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him) in AD 610 in Mecca. The word "Islam" literally means "Peace" and is commonly defined as "one who finds peace through submission to God." Islam is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity, with more than 1.3 billion followers and is forecast to become the world's largest religion in 2050. Muslims are people who follow the Islam faith and they come from many different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, customs and languages. Muslims believe Muhammad received messages from God (Allah) and the messages were recorded in the Quran. He taught that truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise.

- Muhammad has absolute trust in God and in his own mission/purpose.
- The Prophet Muhammad stated truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise.
- Living a truthful life means to live without dishonesty. When you are true to yourself, you are living in alignment with spirit

Readings:

This Quran is not such (a writ) as could be composed by anyone but God. It confirms what has been revealed before, and is an exposition of (Heaven's) law. Without any doubt it's from the Lord of all the worlds. – Quran, 10:37

SOM Reading: 31:6¹: No man has ever plumbed the depths of either the conscious or the subjective life. In both directions, we reach out to Infinity, and since we cannot encompass Infinity, we shall always be expanding and always enlarging our capacity to know and to experience. We need not ask why these things are so. There can be no reason given as to why the Truth is true. We do not create laws and principles, but discover and make use of them. Let us accept this position relative to the laws of Mind and Spirit, and see what we can do with them - rather than how we may contradict the inevitable. Our mind and spirit is our echo of the 'Eternal Thing' Itself, and the sooner we discover this fact, the sooner we shall be made free and happy. The Universe is filled with Spirit and filled with Law. One reacts to the other. We are Spirit and we are Law. The law of our life reacts to our spiritual and material concepts, and builds and re-builds according to our beliefs and faith.

Lesson: The Emperor and the Seed

An emperor in the Far East was growing old and knew it was time to choose his successor. Instead of choosing one of his assistants or his children, he decided something different. He called young people in the kingdom together one day. He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next emperor. I have decided to choose one of you."

The kids were shocked! But the emperor continued. "I am going to give each one of you a seed today. One very special seed. I want you to plant the seed, water it and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from this one seed. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next emperor."

One boy named Ling was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his mother the story. She helped him get a pot and planting soil, and he planted the seed and watered it carefully. Every day he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other youths began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow.

Ling kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. Three weeks, 4 weeks, 5 weeks went by. Still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants but Ling didn't have a plant, and he felt like a failure. Six months went by - still nothing in Ling's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed.

Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Ling didn't say anything to his friends, however. He just kept waiting for his seed to grow.

A year finally went by and all the youths of the kingdom brought their plants to the emperor for inspection. Ling told his mother that he wasn't going to take an empty pot. But honest about what happened, Ling felt sick to his stomach, but he knew his mother was right. He took his empty pot to the palace. When Ling arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other youths. They were beautiful - in all shapes and sizes. Ling put his empty pot on the floor and many of the other kinds laughed at him. A few felt sorry for him and just said, "Hey nice try."

When the emperor arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted the young people. Ling just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the emperor. "Today, one of you will be appointed the next emperor!" All of a sudden, the emperor spotted Ling at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered his guards to bring him to the front. Ling was terrified. "The emperor knows I'm a failure. Maybe he will have me killed!"

When Ling got to the front, the emperor asked his name. "My name is Ling," he replied. All the kids were laughing and making fun of him. The emperor asked everyone to quiet down. He looked at Ling, and then announced to the crowd, "Behold your new emperor! His name is Ling!" Ling couldn't believe it. He couldn't even grow his seed. How could he be the new emperor? Then the emperor said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone here a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled

seeds which would not grow. All of you, except Ling, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Ling was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new emperor!"

The Prophet taught, "Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. And a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person." [Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 8:116]

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What did the boys besides Ling do when their seeds did not grow?

A1. They planted a new seed to hide their embarrassment.

Q2. Why did the emperor say Ling had courage?

A2. It takes courage to admit when we think we failed.

Q3. What does this story teach us?

A3. We can't judge a circumstance as good or bad. We can have faith that God is good and faith in ourselves.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: A seed in a cup

Craft: Dirt in a cup

Materials:

Plastic cups

Gummy worms

Crushed Chocolate cookies



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade: (*The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook*)

Who was Prophet Muhammad?

Prophet Muhammad was a businessman. He successfully led trading caravans across the desert.

Prophet Muhammad was a messenger of God. He received the Quran from God as a message to mankind for all time.

Prophet Muhammad was a husband. His first marriage to Khadija lasted twenty-five years. His subsequent marriages were contracted for several reasons: treaties with feuding tribes; removing the stigma of marrying widows; divorcees, or former slaves; demonstrating marriage as acceptable with "People of the Book" (Jews and Christians).

Prophet Muhammad was a leader. He created a community of Muslims in Medina with laws, rules and charitable customs.

Prophet Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets. Muslims believe that Muhammad was

the last prophet to be sent to God.

Prophet Muhammad was a man. He was a man, not the son of God. As such, he was human and faced all the temptations and limitations any other man would face. However, as one of God's chosen ones, Muhammad was blessed with faith in God.

Prophet Muhammad was a father. He had three sons and four daughters, but unfortunately all of his sons died in infancy and all of his daughters, except for Fatimah, predeceased him.

Tween & Teen Activity: (*The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook*)

Here is a True or False activity for Teens to work on in small groups and then share.

The Prophet married more than four wives at a time, so all Muslims can too.

Trick questions. It's true the prophet was married to more than four women at one time, due to the standards for permissible, marriageable partners that he was trying to set. God states quite clearly in the Quran that no other man should take more than four wives, and actually shouldn't marry more than once if he fears he will be unable to treat his wives fairly and equally.

The Prophet Muhammad taught us how to pray.

True. God repeatedly asks us in the Quran to pray, but the specific postures and words are not stated definitively. The customary manner in which Muslims worldwide pray has been adopted since the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad as people emulated his form of worship.

The leader of the Muslim community has to be a descendant of the Prophet.

Again, this is a trick question. After the prophet passed away, Abu Bakr, a respected Muslim who was the prophet's close friend and father-in-law, was chosen to lead the Muslim community. However, a group of Muslims felt that the prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, should have been the rightful leader since he was the closest descendant of the prophet. This disagreement has led to the primary division in the Muslim world; Sunnis accept Abu Bakr and the subsequent caliphs as rightful leaders, while the Shias recognize only Ali (the fourth caliph) and the descendants of Ali as rightful leaders. Approximately 90% of Muslims are Sunnis and 10% are Shias. Sufis are Muslims who seek an intimate, spiritual connection to God through prayer, music, dance and poetry. They can be either Sunni or Shia.

The Islam religion starts from the same place Christianity does.

True. Abraham is the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These three 'Abrahamic' faiths, as they have come to be known, can all trace their roots back to Abraham. His story is described in the Old Testament as well as in the Quran. Muslims trace their ancestry back to Abraham through his son Ishmael, while Jews trace their lineage back to him through his second son Isaac. The similarities in Abraham's message, when viewed through the individual lenses of these three religions, is remarkable: confirming Abraham as their common ancestor emphasizes to Muslims the belief that God has been sending the same message to mankind. Abraham was the first monotheist (someone who believes in one God).

Discussion: What do you know about Islam that you didn't know before?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

MUSLIM FOUNDATION

Week #3: Piousness

Teacher's Notes: This week we continue our exploration of Muslim traditions with stories of pious individuals, people who are devout, i.e. devoted to God. We will use stories from the Sahih al-Bukari which have been shared with children for generations. This collection is one of the six major 'hadiths,' the stories denoting the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad in Sunni Islam. The hadith is generally accepted by Muslims as a secondary source of Islamic law after the Quran. Remember these sacred stories are important in the Islam religion and should be treated with dignity. To acknowledge their importance, the Muslims say "Peace Be Unto Him." "Him" is the prophet Muhammad or Allah (God). Since God is one, it is also a blessing unto ourselves. Share the Arabic greeting "Salaam alleikum" which means "Peace be upon you."

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahih_al-Bukhari

Main Message: November's theme is Muslim Foundations: Prayer, Truthfulness, Piousness and Generosity. Piousness means showing love for God, displaying great loyalty to God. For us, it means to live from a place of knowing our truth; that God is good and we are one with God. When always living from this place, our thoughts, deeds and actions come from this place. Everything starts from our thoughts. When you change your thinking, you change your life.

- Showing and having love for God/Spirit/Self shows in your outer actions and appearance.
- When you use bad language, you are just making obvious to everybody how far away you really are from Allah/God/Spirit, since your words are in reality a reflection of your own inner self.
- Your words and actions reflect your inner thoughts.

Readings:

“...To each of you we have given a law and a way and a pattern of life. If God had pleased he could surely have made you one people (professing one faith). But he wished to try and test you by that which he gave you. So try to excel in good deeds. To Him will you all return in the end...” – Quran 5:48

SOM Reading: 434:71: When we constructively praise and creatively bless, life abounds with love, peace and joy. Let goodness shine forth. Let us learn to see that everyone is an evolving Christ. Let us so live and think that we may retire at night in peace, knowing that no harm can come to the soul; that we may rise in the morning renewed in body and in mind, with a brighter outlook, a happier expectation and a clearer joy, looking upon all with love, condemning none and blessing even those who seek to injure us. Let us learn to be perfect, even as that Divine Being, residing in the heart of all and overshadowing eternity, must also be perfect.

Lesson: The words reflect one's inner self

Mahmud was a very pious man, but he was not very attractive looking. One day, he was walking along the road, minding his own business, when a lady came up to him, and started calling him names and abusing him. This lady kept saying all kinds of nasty things, and Mahmud just listened to her patiently. Finally, when she was finished calling him names and abusing him, Mahmud just greeted her, smiled, and said,

"And a nice day to you," and continued on his way.

Why did Mahmud, the pious man, behave this way?

It is because he knew that everything she said was just a reflection of her own inner self.

If you use bad language, you are just making obvious to everybody how far away you really are from Allah, since your words are in reality a reflection of your own inner self.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why would the woman shout at the Mahmud?

A1. She was feeling badly within herself (fear, shame, anguish).

Q2. How do you know if your inner thoughts are not in line with your truth?

A2. Your feelings and emotions are not joyous and happy.

Q3. Why would being yelled at in the street bother one person but not the next person?

A3. The first person may think it is true or a reflection of him. The second person knows it has nothing to do with him.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: How we use our words creates the world around us

Craft: The Name Game

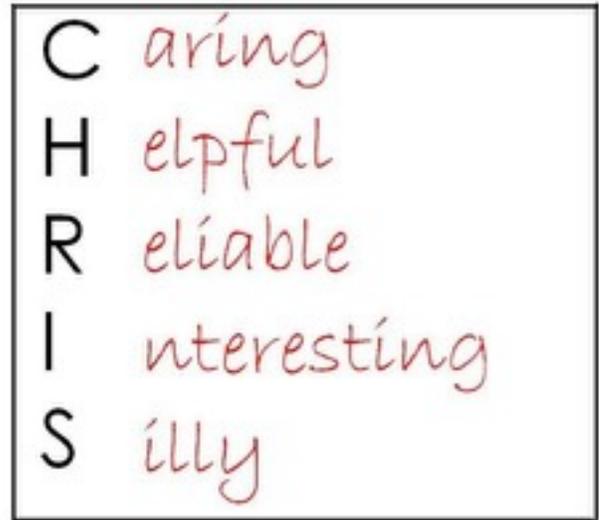
Materials:

Paper
Markers

Directions:

Write your name down the side of the page. Find a word that starts with each letter of your name that describes how you are and how you want to be.

Bonus! Write the name of someone you are challenged with down the side of the page. Use one word to describe how you WANT them to be.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Share this additional story of how our thoughts affect our world.

Did You Thank Allah for Your Eyesight?

A blind boy sat on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet. He held up a sign which said: "I am blind, please help." There were only a few coins in the hat.

A man was walking by. He took a few coins from his pocket and dropped them into the hat. He then took the sign, turned it around, and wrote some words. He put the sign back so that everyone who walked by would see the new words.

Soon the hat began to fill up. A lot more people were giving money to the blind boy. That afternoon the man who had changed the sign came to see how things were. The boy recognized his footsteps and asked, "Were you the one who changed my sign this morning? What did you write?"

The man said, "I only wrote the truth. I said what you said but in a different way."

What he had written was: "Today is a beautiful day and I cannot see it."

Do you think the first sign and the second sign were saying the same thing?

Of course both signs told people the boy was blind. But the first sign simply said the boy was blind. The second sign told people they were so lucky that they were not blind. Should we be surprised that the second sign was more effective?

"It is He, Who has created for you (the sense of) hearing (ears), sight (eyes), and hearts (understanding). Little thanks you give."

Discussion: Why do you believe the second sign was more effective?

Tween & Teen Activity *(The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook)*

Muslims have many ways they show piousness and their devotion to their faith. Muslim teenagers are not allowed to date, drink, dance or do drugs. This is Islamic Law. They also fast during sacred times on the calendar and do not eat pork or gamble.

Drinking, drugs and gambling are harmful habits that can ruin lives; they are self-destructive and exposing yourself to many dangers. The Quran specifically mentions alcohol is an intoxicant and anything that clouds your mind and draws you away from the remembrance of God is prohibited in Islam.

But, what about dating and dancing? This is the guidance provided by “The American Muslim Teenager’s Handbook.”

Dancing in all-male or all-female environments is definitely okay. But dancing with members of the opposite sex is frowned upon if it leads to physical contact or suggestive moves.

For dating, men and women are equal in the eyes of God, and they should respect one another. Marriage is the desire of most families and arranged marriages are not uncommon. Dating is only viewed as a preliminary step to marriage. If you are not ready for marriage, then don’t date. Go out with your friends in a group to avoid getting emotionally bogged down with a lot of feelings that you’re not ready for as a teen. Concentrate on your academics, sports, and volunteer activities while some of your friends are getting sidetracked with boyfriends and girlfriends. You’ll be ahead in the long run.

Discussion: Islam states anything that is considered harmful or interferes with rational thought is forbidden. Do you think this is good or bad for society?

Muslims believe alcohol, drugs and gambling can all contribute to the breakdown of the family unit, the dissolution of strong communities and the downfall of many strong characters who somehow thought addiction could never happen to them. What do you think?

A survey of Muslim teenagers was conducted: 100% said they would avoid drugs, 100% said they would avoid drinking, and 80% said that dating as teens is dumb. What do you think it would be like to be an American Muslim teenager?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

MUSLIM FOUNDATION

Week #4: Generosity

Teacher's Notes: Through the month, we have studied stories of Islam and how Muslims live. Islam originated from the faith of Abraham, just like Judaism and Christianity. Muslims believe and revere all of the Master Teachers including Jesus, Moses and Buddha. The Prophet Mohammad received messages from God to benefit all of mankind. Islam stands for peace and respect for all people. Muslims adhere to laws that promote self-respect and respect for others. Muslims believe we must help others to lead a good life. More and more we see the Golden Thread of Truth that runs through all religions. And, we respect that all paths lead to God.

Main Message: November's theme is Muslim Foundations: Prayer, Truthfulness, Piousness and Generosity. Today we focus on the saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." To internalize this message, we look to some stories of what it means to help our fellow man. Mohammad is not the only Master Teacher to encourage doing good deeds and helping those less fortunate than ourselves. According to Muslim beliefs, God is interested in pious, righteous people who do good deeds on this Earth. And, as He says, they will be rewarded in Paradise. And, as we know, Paradise can be heaven on earth.

- Our strength is in unity, not in division.
- Encouraging good, prohibiting evil, lifting the burden of the weak person and removing an offensive thing from a path are all acceptable prayers.
- It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Readings:

Say: "We believe in God and what has been sent down to us, and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their progeny, and that which was given to Moses and Christ, and to all other prophets by the Lord. We make no distinction among them, and we submit to Him." – Quran, 2:136

SOM Reading: 301:31: We live in Mind and it can return to us only what we think into It. No matter what we do, Law will always obtain. If we are thinking of ourselves as poor and needy, then Mind has no choice but to return what we have thought into It. "It is done unto you as you believe." Thoughts of failure, limitation or poverty are negative and must be counted out of our lives for all time. God has given us a Power and we must use It. We can do more toward saving the world by proving this law than all that charity has ever given to it.

Lesson: A Lesson from Disabled People

Once, a visitor was being shown around a leper colony in India. The colony was built to provide a shelter for those people who were poor and had various physical disabilities. At noon, a gong (a metal disk that produces a sound when hit with a hammer) sounded to gather the inhabitants for the midday meal. People came from all parts of the compound to the dining hall. Suddenly, everyone started laughing at seeing two young men, one riding on the other's back, pretending to be a horse and a rider. They were having lots of fun. As the visitor watched, he was told that the man who carried his friend was blind, and the man being carried was lame (couldn't walk). The one who couldn't see used his feet; the one who couldn't walk used his eyes. Together they helped each other and reached their destination.

Let us use each other's strengths to make up for the weaknesses of others. Our strength is in unity, not in division.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. How do the men use their strengths to help others?

A1. They know that what they have, strong legs/eyesight, can be a powerful asset to others.

Q2. What does it mean to give thanks?

A2. The men do not focus on what they do not have, they only focus on what they have.

Q3. How is it better to give than to received?

A3. Self-worth, self-value, confidence and joy come from what you can give to others, not what others give to you.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Create a situation where the children can only give. What do they receive? Smiles, hugs, etc.....

Craft: The Giving Game

Materials:

Get something for the children to give away, pennies, flowers, cut out hearts, etc....

Directions:

Give each child a number of these items. They 'win' the game if they can give everything away. Find a place to give; in the congregation, in the teen center. You may want to work with your minister to see if it can be done before the adults leave the service.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

We review an additional story of how our thoughts affect our world.

Better to Give

A young man, a student in one of the universities, was one day taking a walk with a professor, who was commonly called the student's friend, from his kindness to those who waited on his instructions.

As they went along, they saw lying in the path a pair of old shoes, which they supposed belonged to a poor man who was employed in a field close by, and who had nearly finished his day's work.

The student turned to the professor, saying, "Let us play a trick on the man. We will hide his shoes, and conceal ourselves behind those bushes, and wait to see his perplexity when he cannot find them."

"My young friend," answered the professor, "we should never amuse ourselves at the expense of the poor. But you are rich, and may give yourself a much greater pleasure by means of this poor man. Put a coin in each shoe, and then we will hide ourselves and watch how this affects him."

The student did so and they both placed themselves behind the bushes close by. The poor man soon finished his work, and came across the field to the path where he had left his coat and shoes.

While putting on his coat he slipped his foot into one of his shoes, but feeling something hard, he stooped down to feel what it was, and found the coin. Astonishment and wonder were seen upon his countenance. He gazed upon the coin, turned it around, and looked at it again and again.

He then looked around him on all sides, but no person was to be seen. He now put the money into his pocket, and proceeded to put on the other shoe; but his surprise was doubled on finding the other coin.

His feelings overcame him; he fell upon his knees, looked up to the heavens and uttered aloud a fervent thanksgiving in which he spoke of his wife who was sick and helpless, and his children without bread, whom this timely bounty, from some unknown hand, would save from perishing.

The student stood there deeply affected, and his eyes filled with tears. "Now," said the professor, "are you not much better pleased than if you had played your intended trick?"

The youth replied, "You have taught me a lesson which I will never forget. I feel now the truth of these words, which I never understood before: "It's more blessed to give than to receive."

Abdullah bin Abbas reported that the prophet said that encouraging good, prohibiting evil, lifting the burden of the weak person and removing an offensive thing from a path are all acceptable prayers to Allah.

Discussion: What would it have felt like for the student if he had played the trick on the man instead?

Tween & Teen Activity

The Art of Generosity: Generous people create an environment that enables people and things to grow. They often provide a framework for making this happen.

Generous people are like good gardeners. They create an environment that encourages people and things to grow. So how do we learn generosity? How can we practice it in our daily lives? How can we be generous toward future generations?

The Philosophy and Principles of Generosity

Ask the people around you, “What has helped you to grow most in your life?” People will respond with, “I had someone who encouraged me. ... They gave me time and made me feel the center of their world. ... They focused on what I did well, but were also prepared to tell the truth. ... They were generous and helped me to follow my way.”

How do people learn to be generous?

Some talk about parents, friends, teachers, managers, leaders and others who embodied the spirit of generosity. Some talk about growing up in a certain culture – a school, a team or a work place – that encouraged people to develop and also give to others. Some talk about learning it from spiritual or religious traditions.

Some people talk about critical points in their lives when they chose to be generous rather than – in its widest sense – greedy. They found that being caring led to both themselves and others feeling better.

Try tackling this exercise. This invites you to look back on your life and describe the generous people you have known. What did these people do right? How did they show generosity?

Activity: On a sheet of paper, write the names of the generous people you have known in your life.

Then, describe the specific things they did to show generosity.

From: <http://thepositivelife.info/the-art-of-generosity/>

Visit for examples and more information.



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

Month #12: Winter Holidays

December's theme is The Gift of Holiday Traditions. The last month of the year has many holidays that are celebrated around the world. The consistent thread is celebrating our spiritual truths and giving to those we love.

Week #1: The Gift of the Magi

Week #2: Hanukkah: The Light of the Menorah

Week #3: Christmas: Joyful Tidings

Week #4: Kwanzaa: Honoring Spirit



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

WINTER HOLIDAYS

Week #1: The Gift of the Magi

Teacher's Notes: This is a long story that will probably take most of your Youth Church time but there is no better story to share the joy of giving. Use the video links or read the story, whichever better suits your classroom. More can be found out about this timeless tale at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gift_of_the_Magi

Main Message: When we exchange gifts, we are looking for just the right present to make our loved ones light up and know that we had picked something just for them, because we knew they would love it. Giving and receiving gifts is a tradition in many holidays. This week, we turn to the work of O. Henry, an American writer, who wrote the classic story, "The Gift of the Magi" in 1905.

- The best gifts are the ones given from your heart.
- The Magi are also in the Christmas Story of Jesus' birth as the three kings who give him gifts.
- Giving gifts is a common thread running through all holidays in December.

Readings:

"You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give." ~ Kahlil Gibran

SOM Reading: 445:6¹: We need spiritual experience. We shall never know peace until we embody it, we shall never know Truth until we become Truth, and we cannot know God unless we sense Him within our own being. The Spirit is ever giving, but we must take. What life does for us must be done through us.

Lesson: The Gift of the Magi

"The Gift of the Magi" is a popular Christmas story about love and sacrifice. The work is one of the most famous stories by O. Henry, an American writer.

The Gift of the Magi

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly scream beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some days to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters.

It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street. Where she stopped the sign read: "Madame Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of "the watch." As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends -- a mammoth task. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do -- What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove, hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice -- what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you." "You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of

a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas, a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay the combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone. But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say, "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

Questions and Answers::

Q1. Do you think this is a happy story or a sad story?

A1. Happy – because we give gifts to show our love for others and when we make a sacrifice, we show our greatest love.

Q2. The Magi are the Three Wise men who visited Baby Jesus. What three gifts did they bring?

A2. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

Q3. How can you find a present for someone that comes from your heart?

A3. Ask what they love, watch where they have a need and listen to what they say they desire.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: A gift box to celebrate giving

Craft: A gift box with a saying inside

Materials:

Small boxes

Ribbons

Markers

Stickers (optional)

Directions:

Write a loving message to someone you love in the bottom of the box (or on a piece of paper and glue it in the box).

Close the box and tie a ribbon around it.

Give it to someone you love.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

The Gift of the Magi talks about giving from love but also from sacrifice.

Q1. Do you think a gift given when you sacrifice something is different than a gift given with no sacrifice?

Q2. What does this quote mean to you? “Do as little harm to others as you can; make any sacrifice for your true friends; be responsible for yourself and ask nothing of others; and grab all the fun you can. Don't give much thought to yesterday, don't worry about tomorrow, live in the moment, and trust that your existence has meaning even when the world seems to be all blind chance and chaos. When life lands a hammer blow in your face, do your best to respond to the hammer as if it had been a cream pie. Sometimes black humor is the only kind we can summon, but even dark laughter can sustain.” – Dean Koontz

Tween & Teen Activity

Print the story of The Gift of the Magi and have the teens take turns reading it.

Q. Is sacrifice important when giving gifts?



THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

WINTER HOLIDAYS

Week #2: Hanukkah: The Light of the Menorah

Teacher's Notes: Hanukkah should not be taught as the “Jewish Christmas.” The menorah is the central focus during the holiday and many Jewish families make an effort to share this holiday with each other. They want to be home with their families when the candles are lit to meditate and remember. The center candle is lit every night and the individual candles are lit (left to right), one a night, until on the eighth day all the candles burn together. The menorah is always put where it can be seen by those outside of the home. Many parents give a few gifts to their children (some say to combat Christmas) but it is not a major holiday for Jews. **If you would like to play the dreidel game, you can purchase dreidels at places like Party City (48 dreidels for \$1.99)**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanukkah>

Main Message: Hanukkah is an eight day holiday that celebrates a miracle. Back in the 2nd century, the Greek government closed down a Jewish temple and banned Judaism. There was a revolt by the Jewish people and the temple was reclaimed and services were started again. The success of the Jewish people to continue practicing their faith was intended to be celebrated by lighting of the Temple's menorah but they only had enough oil for one day. However, miraculously, the oil lasted eight days. Hanukkah is also called The Festival of Lights. The date to celebrate Hanukkah, like other Jewish holidays, changes based upon the Jewish calendar.

- The flame of a candle reminds us to come into the light of the Divine.
- Each of us shines our light by sharing our gifts and talents.
- Hanukkah is celebrated to remember God's miracles and family connections.

Readings:

We light these lights for the miracles and the wonders, for the redemption and the battles that you made for our forefathers, in those days at this season, through your holy priests. During all eight days of Hanukkah these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make ordinary use of them except for to look at them in order to express thanks and praise to Your great Name for Your miracles, Your wonders and Your salvations. – The *Hanerot Halalu* : recited when the menorah candles are lit.

SOM Reading: 430:21: "Ye are the light of the world." Man is the candle of the Lord. How important then that this light be kept trimmed and burning with the oil of pure Spirit, through the wick of peace and joy. In this way do we glorify that Indwelling God who is the Heavenly Father and the cosmic Mother of all.

Lesson: One Little Candle

Celebrating the light that we are: Each of you is a light in the world. We use candles in many practices as we celebrate our light.

One Little Candle

by J. Maloy Roach and G. Mysels

When the day is dark and dreary and your way is hard to find,
Don't let your heart be weary, just keep this thought in mind;
It is better to light just One Little Candle than to stumble in the dark,
Better far that you light just One Little Candle,
All you need's a tiny spark.
If we'd all say a prayer that the world would be free
The wonderful dawn of a new day we'll see,
And if everyone lit just One Little Candle,
What a bright world this would be.

Questions:

Q1. Where do you see lit candles?

A1. At church, on the alter, at a dinner table.

Q2. Why are candles used in religious ceremonies?

A2. Flames have long been used to symbolize the light of the Divine.

Q3. What does it mean to let your light shine?

A3. To be generous with your gifts and talents.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: The Hanukkah handprint menorah is a great way to celebrate Hanukkah.

Food: Chocolate coins are often given to children during Hanukkah

Craft: Hanukkah Handprint Menorah:

Materials:

White and blue construction paper

Yellow and orange markers

Scissors

Glue

Directions:

Trace your child's hands onto a piece of blue construction paper and cut each one out.

Glue the handprints onto the white piece of construction paper so that the thumbs on each hand overlap to form the menorah.

Use the markers to draw flames on the "candles."



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

Play the Dreidel Game! Give each child 8 to 10 game pieces (chocolate coins are traditionally used but could also be pennies or raisins).

Each child gets a dreidel.

Each child puts one of their game pieces in the middle.
Have one child spin their dreidel.

- a) If נ (*nun*) is facing up, the player does nothing.
- b) If ג (*gimel*) is facing up, the player gets everything in the pot at which point, everyone puts another game piece in the middle before the next child spins.
- c) If ה (*hei*) is facing up, the player gets half of the pieces in the pot. (If there are an odd number of pieces in the pot, the player takes the half the pot rounded up to the nearest whole number).
- d) If ש (*shin*) or פ (*pei*) is facing up, the player adds a game piece to the pot (often accompanied with the chant "Shin, Shin, put one in").

If the player is out of pieces, they are either "out" or may ask another player for a "loan."
Whoever ends up with the entire pot, wins.



Tween & Teen Activity

Candle Lighting Ceremony:

It is a tradition at Jewish Bar (male) and Bat (female) Mitzvahs to have a Candle Lighting Ceremony. The ceremony is done when the boy turns 13 (girls it's 12) and it recognizes the time when the child becomes completely accountable for their actions.

For the ceremony, each teen should have a candle. Sit or stand in a circle. The teacher lights their candle and says something about the importance of being responsible for your thought, words and deeds. They light the candle of the teen next to them who then also states an affirmation of responsibility. Continue around the circle until everyone is complete.





THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

WINTER HOLIDAYS

Week #3: Christmas: Joyful Tidings

Teacher's Notes: This retelling of the Christmas Story is not directly from the Bible but a composite of New Thought interpretation and Biblical references.

Main Message: Christmas is the day we celebrate Jesus' birth. Jesus was a teacher to all of us because he knew his connection to God. Jesus was love in action. He gave many lessons to his followers that are recorded in the Bible. During his life, he helped many understand their connection to God and now, two thousand years after his birth, he continues to teach all of us about our connection to God.

- Jesus is important because he knew his connection to God.
- Jesus is loved and special and you are loved and special.

Readings:

Luke 2:14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.

SOM Reading: 359.2¹: Jesus the man became the living embodiment of the Christ. If we can look upon Jesus from this viewpoint, we shall be able to study his life as a living example.

Lesson:

The Story of Jesus's Birth

God sent the angel Gabriel to visit Mary in the city of Nazareth in Galilee. Mary was a young woman who was engaged to marry Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth. Both Mary and Joseph were descendants of King David.

The angel spoke to Mary and told her, "The Lord is with you, and you are greatly favored." Mary was troubled. She did not know what the angel meant. Then he said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have favor with God. You will have a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great. He will be a king who will rule forever."

How surprised Mary was! She did not understand what the angel meant. "How can this be?" she asked. The angel answered, "This child who will be born to you will be the Son of God. Nothing is too hard for the Lord." And Mary believed the angel. "Let it be as you have said," she answered simply.

The angel of the Lord told Joseph, too, about the coming of Jesus. He said, "Mary will have a son, and you shall call his name Jesus: for he will be an example to all his people. How glad Joseph must have been to know the Savior was to be born. He and Mary eagerly awaited the coming of the baby Jesus.

Before Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem. Since many people were travelling to Bethlehem as required for the census, Mary and Joseph could not find a hotel room. They could not find a room to stay anywhere. Finally, a kind innkeeper offered them his barn so they would not have to stay out in the cold. This barn had hay for them to lay on and



keep warm and it had many animals living in the barn. It was here that Jesus was going to be born.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will toward men."

And it came to pass that the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go unto Bethlehem and see this thing which the Lord has made known unto us."

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made it known among the people saying what was told concerning the child. And all that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Now three wise men departed to meet the child and lo, the star which they had seen in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they came into the barn, they saw the young child with Mary, His mother, and they presented unto Him gifts, gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why do we celebrate Christmas?

A1. We celebrate Christmas because it was the day Jesus was born. Jesus represents the Christ Consciousness, which is the awareness that God is Good and only Good.

Q2. What other words do you know to represent the Good of God?

A2. Love, Joy, Peace, etc.

Q3. Why is Jesus important?

A3. Jesus' life was a demonstration of a person who was aware of his connection to God. Jesus grew to know that he was the living embodiment of God.

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Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft: Bell bracelet to symbolize the heralding in of Jesus' birth

Craft: Bell Bracelet

Materials:

3 pipe cleaners

3 jingle bells

Directions:

Thread your bells on a single pipe cleaner. Twist the pipe cleaners together. Carefully twist the ends together to make a circle.



Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

The gift of Christmas cards began just over 100 years ago in England. As we show our love to others this Christmas by sending cards and writing letters, we can be reminded of letters written thousands of years ago. Each letter shows love for friends and family. The first Christmas song was sung by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem, “Glory to God in the Highest.” Now we sing Christmas carols at church, at home and at school. We hear them on the radio and television. Christmas carols tell us a lot about the Christmas season. We sing them because we are happy that God loves us and Jesus was born. When we are happy with other people this Christmas, remember that everyone is loved.

Activity: Christmas ‘thank you’ cards



Tween & Teen Activity

The Colors of Christmas

Red and green are used during Christmas but what do the colors represent?

Green is the color of evergreen trees, holly, ivy and Mistletoe that have been used for thousands of years to decorate during the long cold winter.

Romans gave evergreen branches as a sign of good luck. Egyptians would bring palm branches into their houses in the winter. It was a way to remind themselves that winter would not last forever!

Red is the color of holly berries and also the color of Bishops' robes in the Catholic Church. It is also the color of Santa's clothes.

Gold is the color of the sun and light, both important during a cold dark winter. Red and gold are also the colors you see in a fire as the fire keeps you warm.
(Red for advent).

Activity: Decorate your church. Grab some red ribbon and make bows, tie it around trees outside, use your imagination!





THE GOLDEN THREAD OF TRUTH

WINTER HOLIDAYS

Week #4: Kwanzaa: Honoring Spirit:

Teacher's Notes: Kwanzaa is a new holiday, established in 1966 after the Watts riots in Los Angeles, to bring together family, community and culture. This is a secular holiday and each day focuses on a different value. The holiday encourages growth, self-determination, achievement and success. The last day of Kwanzaa, or Imani, focuses on gift giving as a means to honor the creative spirit and reaffirm self-worth. Therefore, the gifts are often homemade rather than purchased. However, the essence of Kwanzaa does not lie in exchanging presents, but in commemorating a shared heritage. Togetherness is emphasized as family and friends come together through this special time to align themselves with the guided principles. Kwanzaa is the world's fastest growing holiday. The official Kwanzaa website is: <http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>

Main Message: Kwanzaa is an African American secular holiday which is celebrated from December 26th until New Year's Day. Dr. Maulana Karenga first envisioned the idea for a cross-national African holiday as a way to bring African Americans together as a community and family. Each of the seven days of the holiday commemorates a different guiding principle: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith). Kwanzaa has been embraced across cultural and racial divides to become a wonderful celebration of family and culture that reinforces basic values.

- Each member of our family and community is important.
- Living our core values is important.

Readings:

On the last day of Kwanzaa, Imani, which we also call the Day of Meditation, we ask ourselves three questions which Kawaiida philosophy says everyone must ask themselves: Who am I? Am I really who I am? Am I all I ought to be? In our constant quest to become and be the best of what it means to be both African and human at the same time, Kwanzaa offers an important context for reassessment and recommitment to values and practices which lead to this. It thus speaks a special message of Africa not only to Africans but to all people concerned with reaffirming family, community and culture, and in realizing that essential meaning and purpose of human life, that is to say, constantly bringing good in the world. ~ Dr. Maulana Karenga, Creator of Kwanzaa

SOM Reading: 336:21: Our individualized Universe is forever complete, yet forever completing Itself, in order that every experience may teach us to transcend some previous one, in ever ascending cycles, upward bound. This is the true meaning of misfortune or vicissitude or suffering, which is never a thing in itself. Our recognition of Truth is Its pronouncement of Itself, and when a man says "I am," it is God proclaiming His own Being.

Lesson: Anansi and his Sons

When Anansi's first son was born and Anansi and his wife, Aso, were ready to name the child, the baby spoke up and said, "I have brought my own name with me. It is See Trouble." Their second son also announced his name in this way. He was Road Builder.

Each of his six sons in turn announced their names in this way. There was River Drinker, Game Skinner, Stone Thrower and Cushion.



Once, Anansi had to go on a long journey. On his trip, he found a big, bright, shiny ball. He was bringing it home, when he fell into the lake and was swallowed by a big fish.

Anansi decided right then that he would give the bright shiny object to whoever rescued him.

As time passed, and Anansi did not return home, his family became worried. See Trouble looked ahead to see Anansi inside the big fish. He told his brothers. Right away, Road Builder cleared a path through the forest for his brothers to follow.

When they got to the lake, it was the thirsty brother's turn.

River Drinker drank up all the water in the lake. There was the big fish at the bottom. Game skinner went right to work. He cut open that fish to let Anansi out. Anansi was still holding that bright, shiny object he had found.

Suddenly a giant bird flew down and grabbed Anansi. It took him way up into the sky. Stone Thrower grabbed a rock and threw it. He hit the bird just right to make it let go of Anansi. Down, down Anansi fell, but he didn't get hurt because Cushion put himself in the way. Anansi landed softly.

Anansi wanted to give the bright, shiny object to the son who had rescued him, but he couldn't decide who had done the most to help him.

He gave the bright, shiny thing to Nyame, (moon spirit) who put it up in the sky until someone could figure out which son deserved it the most. It is still there in the sky. You can see it tonight.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. Why couldn't Anansi decide who to give the shiny object to?

A1. Everyone contributed – without all of their gifts, Anansi would not have been rescued.

Q2. What is the shiny object?

A2. The moon.

Q3. Why is this a good story about Unity?

A3. Unity means we are all one. That each of our actions affect others as well as ourselves. When we work together as a community, we can do great things.

Activities/Crafts:

Symbolism of Craft The colors of Kwanzaa are black, red and green, the same as the Kwanzaa flag. This family chain reminds us that great things come when we all work together.

Craft: Kwanzaa Family Chain

Materials:

Construction paper (green, red, black)

Black markers

Glue

Scissors



Directions:

Cut your construction paper into strips.

Write your name and the name of your family members on pieces of green or red paper.

Glue the strips to form a chain with a black strip in between every colored strip.

Advanced Material for 4th & 5th grade:

From: <http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/NguzoSaba.shtml>

Kwanzaa was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African American people as well as Africans throughout the world African community. These values are called the Nguzo Saba which in Swahili means the Seven Principles. Developed by Dr. Karenga, the Nguzo Saba stand at the heart of the origin and meaning of Kwanzaa, for it is these values which are not only the building blocks for community but also serve to reinforce and enhance them.

Tween & Teen Activity

There is no way to understand and appreciate the meaning and message of Kwanzaa without understanding and appreciating its profound and pervasive concern with values. In fact, Kwanzaa's reason for existence, its length of seven days, its core focus and its foundation are all rooted in its concern with values.

Values Activity:

Pass out a paper with Core Values on it: Peace, wealth, happiness, success, friendship, fame, authenticity, power, influence, justice, integrity, joy, love, recognition, family, truth, wisdom, status and space for a few more (attached).

- Have the students review the list, and fill in values they don't see in the blank lines provided.
- Have the students put a star next to the values they consider important.
- Then, have them narrow their list to 8 items.
- Then, have them narrow their list to 5 items.
- Then, have them narrow their list to 3 items.
- Finally, have them choose their top two core values.

Ask the group members to share their top two values. Ask the group these questions:

1. How did you narrow your list?

2. How do you express these core values in your life?
3. How can you stay focused on your core values each day? (examples: put my list in my car, on my computer, in my locker, etc.)

Nguzo Saba

The Seven Principles



Umoja



Kujichagulia



Ujima



Ujamaa



Nia



Kuumba



Imani

Umoja ▲ Unity
To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

Kujichagulia ▲ Self-Determination
To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

Ujima ▲ Collective Work and Responsibility
To build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and so solve them together.

Ujamaa ▲ Cooperative Economics
To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia ▲ Purpose
To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba ▲ Creativity
To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani ▲ Faith
To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Dr. Maulana Karenga
Creator of Kwanzaa
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marjorie Helms-Karish, MBA, RScP, believes as we teach our children through the ancient texts, we also teach tolerance, understanding and compassion. After a successful career as a marketing and technology executive, she has turned her attention to ways to promote peace on the planet. Her program,

www.TheGoldenThreadOfTruth.com

The program provides books for parents and children and curriculum for Home Church and Youth Ministry. She resides in Colorado with her husband and their two sons.

END NOTES

1 Science of Mind Textbook (SOM), by Ernest Holmes (page, paragraph)

2 Aesop's Fables