

Multifaith Bible Study for Children and Youth

Reclaiming the
Heart of Humanity:
Teaching Peace



Parliament of the World's Religions: October 15-19, 2015

Vicki Michela Garlock, Ph.D.

Nurture Program Coordinator and Curriculum Specialist

Jubilee! Community Church, Asheville, NC

Founder, Faith Seeker Kids

Faith as a Journey

Basic Assumptions

- Faith is a way of living

Faith, then, is a quality of human living. At its best it has taken the form of serenity and courage and loyalty and service: a quiet confidence and joy which enable one to feel at home in the universe, and to find meaning in the world and in one's own life, a meaning that is profound and ultimate, and is stable no matter what may happen to oneself at the level of immediate event.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Faith and Belief (1987)

- Kids can do this
- Faith is a life-long process



Getting Started: Curriculum Overview

Age Groups

- Preschool-Kindergarten
- Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School



Themes

- Peace
- Compassion
- In the Desert (Moses saga)
- Dreamers (Joseph story)
- Embracing our Dark Side
- Creation Stories from Around the World
- Blessings and Gratitude
- Awe and Wonder



Multifaith Education: Older Groups



Middle School

Cognitive Development

- Good at categories and sub-categories
- Compare and contrast differing viewpoints
- Solid memory abilities
- Reasonably adept at reading
- Beginning to attain adult-like abstract thinking

Multifaith Approach

- Various religious traditions
- Denominations within traditions
- Different texts with different styles
- Similarities and differences
- Remember from week-to-week
- Can read themselves



The Peaceful Kingdom

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Basic Lesson

- Explore passage briefly
- Crafts/Activities
- Modern-day leaders

Interfaith piece

- Connection to Judaism
- Connections to other texts/traditions



Tao Te Ching

Chapter 31

Weapons are the tools of violence; all decent men detest them.

Weapons are the tools of fear; a decent man will avoid them except in the direst necessity and, if compelled, will use them only with the utmost restraint. Peace is his highest value. If the peace has been shattered, how can he be content? His enemies are not demons, but human beings like himself. He doesn't wish them personal harm. Nor does he rejoice in victory. How could he rejoice in victory and delight in the slaughter of men?

He enters a battle gravely, with sorrow and with great compassion, as if he were attending a funeral.

Excerpt from chapter 30

Whoever relies on the Tao in governing men doesn't try to force issues or defeat enemies by force of arms. For every force there is a counterforce. Violence, even well intentioned, always rebounds upon oneself.

Excerpt from chapter 37

If powerful men and women could center themselves in [the Tao], the whole world would be transformed by itself, in its natural rhythms. People would be content with their simple, everyday lives, in harmony, free of desire.

When there is no desire, things are at peace.

Upper Elementary

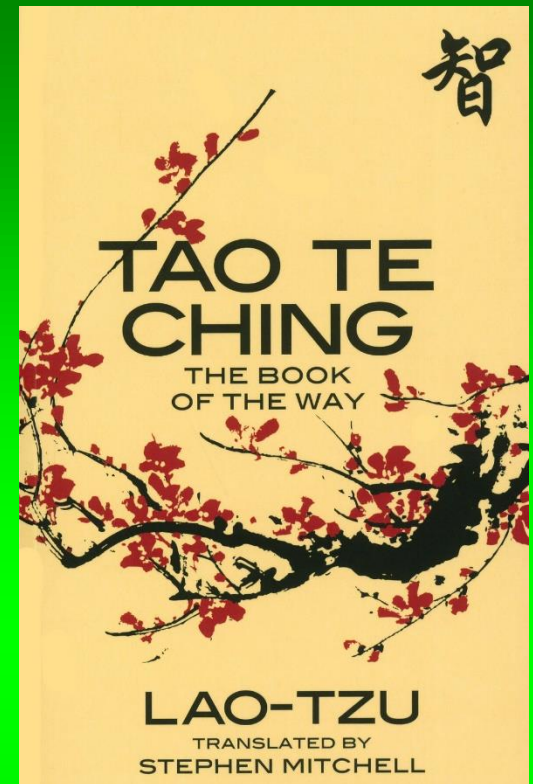
- Hear same basic Bible passage
- Read by teachers
- Broken down into smaller chunks
- More time on passage
- Simpler crafts/activities
- Expansions less extensive



Tao Te Ching

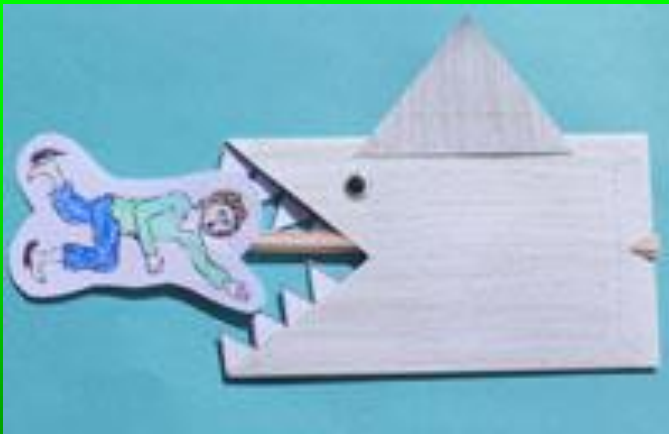
Excerpt from Chapter 32

If powerful men and women
could remain centered in the Tao,
then all things would be in harmony.
The world would become a paradise.
all people would be at peace,
and the law would be written in their hearts.



Multifaith Approach

- Major traditions
- Offer comparisons for them
- Cross-cultural understanding



Multifaith Education: Younger Groups

P-K & Lower Elem. Cognitive Dev.

- Not as advanced in memory, reading, or thinking
- Rudimentary ability to compare/contrast
- Rudimentary abstract abilities



Multifaith Approach

- General faith-related books
 - Holidays
 - Kids from around the world
- Stories from other traditions
 - Jataka tales
 - Panchatantra
 - Indigenous legends



Peace Unit

- Peaceful kingdom
- Jesus calms the storm
- Jesus appears to the disciples
- Woman who touched Jesus
- Do not worry
- Loo-Wit, the fire-keeper/Peace pipe tales
- Buddhist tales
 - Prince and Sticky Hair
 - Quail King and the Hunter
 - Kind and Wise Stage
 - Four Harmonious Friends



Prince and Sticky Hair

(Shortened from Buddha at Bedtime)

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon when the boat carrying Prince Hector back from overseas came into harbor. Before the young prince left the vessel, the captain warned him, “Your Highness, while you have been away training to be a warrior, an evil monster called Sticky Hair has come to live in the forest, so I advise you not to take that route to the palace.”

“Thank you for your advice,” replied Hector, “but I’ll be fine. I want to get home before sunset. And I have my weapons if I need them.” “After all,” he thought, “I’m a trained warrior. I’m not afraid of a silly old monster.”

Just as Prince Hector was beginning to think that the monster didn't exist, he reached a clearing in the forest and there stood the most gigantic, ugly creature he had ever seen. The creature had a huge head and he stared at the prince with eyes as big as dinner plates. Two big orange tusks stuck out of his enormous mouth and his teeth were green and revolting. His belly was big and round like a beach ball and covered in large pale orange spots.

“Grrrrr!” roared Sticky Hair, “What do you think you are doing in *my* wood, little man? You look like tasty morsel and I'm going to eat you for dinner!”

Hector replied, “I'm a warrior. I can easily defeat you with my sword. I dare you to fight me.”

Swiftly as the wind, the prince leapt forward and thrust his sword at the monster. But to his surprise, it just stuck in the creature's sticky hair.

So the prince left his sword there, quickly rolled out of the way, got to his feet and grabbed his bow. He shot arrow after arrow at the monster, but like the sword, each one just became tangled in his sticky hair.

“Ha, ha, ha!” boomed Sticky Hair. “You’ll never beat me”

Hector now had only his club left for protection, so he swung it at Sticky Hair with all his might, but it too, became caught in the monster’s hair and was pulled from the prince’s strong grip. “I’m not defeated yet!” he shouted. “My weapons may be useless, but I’m young and strong, and I’ll fight you with my fists,” he cried, as he ran and leapt on the monster – and got firmly stuck!

Even now, as Prince Hector dangled from the creature’s sticky hair, he continued to act fearlessly.

“Why are you not frightened of me, little man? I could gobble you up in a snap and a crack!” Sticky Hair threatened fiercely.

Hector was busy thinking about what to do next. He realized that he would have to use his brains to outwit the creature, instead of his weapons.

“I’ll tell you why I’m not afraid of you! My skin is coated in poison, so if you eat me you’ll die. I dare you to eat me!”

Sticky Hair didn’t believe Hector at first, but the more the prince insisted, the more worried the monster became. Reluctantly, he pulled the prince from his matted coat and set him on the ground, unharmed.

Reclaiming the Heart

- to stories
- to themselves
- to one another



What We Try to Do

- Biblical literacy
- Understand/appreciate other traditions
- Explore their own connection to the Divine



Jubilee! Community Church

- Founded in 1984
- Theology
 - Creation Spiritual a la Matthew Fox
 - Panentheism

- Practice – like other churches
 - opening song
 - gift of singing, poetry, or dance
 - scripture readings (OT, NT, other)
 - sharing the peace
 - sermon
 - passing the offering plate
 - closing song
 - benediction

- Practice – not like other churches
 - call in the directions
 - ring a Buddhist bowl
 - chant from dances of universal peace repertoire
 - sermons are interactive
 - no hymnal

Do Kids get Confused?

“Of course they are confused because the Great Mystery is confusing!”

“What do you think kids might be confused about – the one true way to articulate the Divine or the one true way to access the Divine presence in their lives?”