

ALL TOGETHER NOW

"WHAT IS MEDITATION"

(ELEMENTARY/TWEENS)

LESSON INTENTION

Meditation can help us access God's wisdom in all situations.

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES: FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- In Unity, prayer and meditation are entwined, and the distinction may seem confusing to some.
- It is sometimes said that prayer is talking with God and meditation is listening to God; in a certain sense, this is true. However, meditation goes beyond listening; rather, it is immersing oneself deeply in the divine presence, and thereby experiencing our true God-self, or Christ-nature.
- Through meditation, we can feel God, and from this intimate knowing, divine revelations come.
- In prayer, we actively claim spiritual truths for ourselves or others. Particularly with affirmations and denials, we set an intention to align our thoughts with God-thoughts, in order to clear ourselves of error thinking and accept a higher truth.
- In meditation, we seek to saturate ourselves with Spirit, and trust that awareness will bring with it whatever is needed next in our spiritual unfolding.
- These distinctions do not need to be explained in detail to the children. It is enough that they know there is a place of inner stillness where God can be directly felt. Our activities in this unit give them experiences of how to begin accessing that inner realm.

AFFIRMATION

I feel God's presence in meditation.

BIBLE QUOTE

“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.” —Jeremiah 33:3

SACRED CIRCLE

Bell Ringer

Rings the bell to signal transitions or to call for centering when needed.

Circle Transformation

Set up the sacred circle items and puts them away when the circle is over.

Candle Lighter

Turn on your light as we focus on the light within us.

Connection Leader

Chooses from the following:

- My name is _____. I am _____. The class affirms the child by repeating the statement.
- My name is _____. My favorite _____ is.... Fill in the blank...

Heart Agreement Angel

Leads the group in reading the heart agreements.

Blessing Angel

Invites the children to send a Wish You Well Blessing to all those here and not with us today.

Sacred Breath Leader

Leads the group in a centering activity: Breath Choices: DRAIN; BALLOON; PRETZEL....

Heart Lock-In

Relax & Breathe; Focus on your heart; Send feeling of love/appreciation to self and others.

Prayer Angel

Invites everyone to place their prayer stick into the sand. Invite the rest of the children to do the same. Share the **PRAYER FOR PROTECTION**.

Love Offering Angel

Leads the children in blessing the love offering and then passes the basket.

Celebration Leader

Passes out the shakers and invites the children to share something they would like to celebrate.

Affirmation Leader

Shares the affirmation of the day. Teacher leads a discussion about what it might mean. Invite the children to commit to it for the week. ***“I connect with God within me whenever I want.”***

Closing Prayer

Focus on the candle again. Pray: *"God, make my life a little light within the world to glow. A little flame burning bright wherever I may go. Candle, candle burning bright, thank you for your loving and radiant light."* Candle lighter then turns off candle as all affirm God's presence in our lives.

STORY

"Jesus in the Wilderness," Matthew 4 (Paraphrased)

Story Focus/Interpretation

Staying focused on God no matter what is happening.

(In the Bible passage, the word "devil" is used. In Unity we understand that term to be the state of consciousness that is ignorant or adverse to our divine nature. Because the word "devil" conjures up old images of an outside entity, we are using the term "negative thoughts" to represent that part of ourselves that is unaware or acting as if we are not connected to our spiritual nature.)

Say:

Soon after Jesus started teaching, he felt the need to go off by himself into the desert. Spirit led him there so that Jesus could know more clearly the best way to go about teaching. Not only was Jesus by himself for 40 days, but he did not eat for all that time! He was very hungry.

Suddenly, negative thoughts showed up in Jesus' mind to try to keep him from thinking about God and following God's wisdom. These thoughts said, "If you are really a child of God, why don't you turn these stones into bread so you can eat them?" But Jesus said, "Wait a minute, our scriptures teach that we are fed as much by the words of God as we are by food for our bodies. You cannot trick me into turning away from God."

So then the negative thoughts created an image in Jesus' mind of Jesus standing on top of the holy temple in the holy city of Jerusalem. The negative thoughts said, "If you are a child of God, you could just jump off, and angels would swoop in and catch you." But Jesus said, "Our scriptures also teach us not to ask God to do things just to make us look important to others. We do not have to put God to the test. We can trust that God will care for us in the best ways. You cannot trick me into turning away from God."

Next the negative thoughts created an image in Jesus' mind of Jesus standing on top of a very high mountain. They showed Jesus all the beautiful kingdoms of the world and said, "If you will bow down and let me be your master, I will give you all these things." But Jesus said, "Go away from me! Our scriptures also teach that God is the One Presence and One Power that can bring us everything we need. You cannot trick me into turning away from God." So those thoughts finally went away and left Jesus alone. Once they were gone, positive messages of Spirit filled Jesus and cared for all his needs.

Discussion Questions

- Where did Jesus go? How long was he there?
- Jesus encountered some difficulties in the desert. What were they?
- How did Jesus respond to the difficulties?
- What lies were the negative thoughts trying to convince Jesus of?
- I wonder what negative thoughts have tried to get your attention?
- Lies are statements that are not true. Would God speak words that are not true? Would God speak words that are not loving? What might God say about you?
- What are some ways we can learn to hear God's words?
- What are some ways we could be distracted from listening to God, in the same way the negative thoughts distracted Jesus?
- What could you do to help yourself hear God's words more clearly?
- I wonder why positive messages came after Jesus got rid of the negative thoughts.
- What do positive thoughts tell you?

CREATIVE EXPERIENCE CHOICES

Meditation Practice

(These techniques help children learn to still the body, slow the breathing, focus on one element, detect subtle differences in the body, and change the vibrations of the body—useful techniques for healing and calming meditations.)

Supplies

- None

Action:

- After inviting the children to sit in a circle, tell them that you would like to see if they can breathe in a special way.
- Teach them to breathe in slowly by extending the stomach first, then the rib cage, and finally the shoulders and upper chest. Exhale in reverse order. Practice several times.
- When they have mastered this technique, invite them to practice intoning certain sounds with you. Tell them that you would like them to take a slow deep breath in, in the way they have learned, then create sounds on the slow exhalation. Ask them to be aware of where in their bodies they notice each sound. Proceed through AAHH, OOO, EEE, and AUM. Allow time for them to tell where they noticed the sound most. Repeat if desired.
- Next, ask who would like to sit in the center of the circle and have their name chanted. Guide the other children in taking a deep breath in, then chanting the child's name on the exhale. Continue until all who wish have had a turn in the center. Ask about their feelings when this vibration surrounded them.
- Then invite them to chant in the same manner, "God," "Jesus," and "Jesus Christ." Ask for reflections on what they felt, both physically and emotionally.
- Let them know that they can use these techniques to calm themselves down whenever they are upset, or to call for guidance when they need it.

I Can Hear It

Supplies

- 8-12 small glass jars with lids, all of same size
- 2 trays
- Chair
- 4-6 different kinds of small, hard items such as popcorn kernels, uncooked rice, pennies, nickels, dried beans, seeds, uncooked pasta, cloves, peppercorns, cereal, etc.
- (Alternative: 2 sets of 4-6 different types of rattles)

Prepare Ahead

- To create two identical sets of 4–6 jars, divide the jars into two equal sets. Then divide each small, hard item evenly into 2 groups. Place the same amount of the same item into 2 jars, one for each set. Replace the lids and then place the same number of jars on each of the 2 trays.

Action

- Invite one child to sit in a chair with the first tray of jars in his or her lap.
- The rest of the children form a line directly behind the chair. (If there are enough children, another group can be formed at the opposite end of the room.)
- The child closest to the chair has the second tray and he or she chooses one of the jars to shake.
- The seated child attempts to choose the correct jar from his/her own tray to make a duplicate sound.
- If unsuccessful, the child behind the chair repeats the action with another jar.
- The game continues until the child seated in the chair makes an accurate guess. The child who was initiating the sounds now sits in the chair; the next child in line takes the tray and initiates a sound.
- Continue the activity as long as interest is maintained.
- Point out that close attention must be given in order to hear the correct sound. This is how we focus and pay attention to God-thoughts during meditation.

CLOSING CIRCLE

Closing circle can be done before we go into the sanctuary if time allows.

Gather all children together again in a closing circle.

Invite children to do any of the following:

- Share any creations from today.
- Share one thing they learned today.
- Say what they might do differently this week as a result of what they learned today.
- Repeat today's affirmation.
- Speak today's Bible scripture.
- Say the Affirmative Prayer for Protection or the Prayer of Faith
- Close with prayer of gratitude for something in the day or something in their lives: "I am grateful, God, for _____."