

Unlocking the Story Using Creative Activities

Exploring through Storytelling

Exploring through storytelling engages the students by inviting them to use their imaginations to see how the story is alive in them. *“When we personify images, gestures, and other artistic expressions, allowing them full autonomous identity, we make it possible for them to act as agents of change.”* (Shaun McNiff) When we explore what the characters and scenes are telling us, we are more able to see how the story is a part of our own life.

Storytelling gives the students the opportunity to exercise their imaginations and strong imaginations are necessary for transformation. Without imagination we cannot visualize anything greater than we already are. With imaginations we dream our world into being.

There are many ways to use storytelling as a creative experience.

Some ideas from Joanne Ramseyer, MA, ATR, LCPC

- Share a traditional or Bible story and then ask the students to tell the story in a different way
- Invite them to choose a character and tell a different story about it
- Choose a picture in a magazine and create a story around it
- Ask a question about the story and then write a story about the question
- Read all of the story except the end and invite the students to complete it
- Give the students a beginning statement and invite them to create a story
- Use “message cards” to begin a story

Exploring through Drama or Puppets

Drama, and/or re-enacting a Bible story, is an effective way to involve the students in the actual story. They can be the characters and experience, first hand, what it might have been like to be those people. Make sure the students are familiar with the story and instead of reading the story invite the students to retell the basic elements of the story in a way that they understand them. They do not have to stick to the details of the story but can use some of the metaphysical interpretation or deeper meaning of the story in their reenactment. If they need help getting started then begin by reading some of the lines of the story and then prompt them to continue with statements such as: ***Then what happened, How do you think they felt, What would you have done, etc.***

Dramatizing the story in this way allows the students to really become part of the story and to begin to gain a deeper understanding of it and how they can use the story’s message in their everyday lives. Allowing the students to act out the story also helps to get it into their body and to remember the details more clearly.

The Creation Story, Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 for ages 5 to 8

Some ideas from: Musikgarten, "God's Children Sing"

First practice the motions so the children are familiar with them.

- **1st Day:** Stationary movement with bursts of light moving high and low in all directions. Travel to dark corners and show light bursts out from there.
- **2nd Day:** Free space, with water running everywhere. Experiment with stopping and running in different directions.
- **3rd Day:** Stationary movement, with plants growing up from seeds, reaching for the light from low to high, and spreading side to side.
- **4th Day:** Stationary movement as the sun is born with an explosion of movement. The sun moves across the sky and shines everywhere in all directions. The hands show the moon a smaller size and moving from low to high to low. Stars are shown by opening each hand in a twinkling gesture.
- **5th Day:** Free space, making fish fins with the arms which move together to create a swimming movement. Extending the arms and moving them from the shoulders can create a flying movement.
- **6th Day:** Animal movements suggested by the children. Try to include contrasting movements such as slither, bounce, trot, etc. Have the children greet each other as a gesture of humankind.
- **7th Day:** Day of rest. Children can improvise.

Once you are satisfied that the children can follow the motions, invite them to use the motions to act out the story as you tell it.

Exploring through Movie Clips

Source, "Video Talks for Kids," by: Patricia Alderdice Senseman

"Children love to go to movie theaters to watch movies. In a new century full of media awareness, what better way to reach kids where they are than to use movies? By showing a clip from a popular movie, you immediately grab the children's attention. You meet them where they are. You begin with something that is familiar and lead them to discover a TRUTH PRINCIPLE."

Always preview the clip you are going to use. You will be able to more finely tune the point that you want to make by watching the clip ahead of time. And you won't be embarrassed by ignorance. Set up the clip before you show it and follow up the clip after you show it. You may want to summarize what has taken place in the movie so far before you show a clip. You may want to review the events in a movie clip right after showing it. Have several introductory and summary statements prepared.

Some of the movie clips you may want to rewind and show twice. The action and dialog may go so quickly that the children may need to hear it twice. Show the clip once. Then tell the children what to listen for the second time.

A Word About Copyright Law

The US Copyright Act treats displays or performance of multimedia presentations, films, and videotapes by nonprofit organizations (including churches) to a small group of individuals as "public performances" even if no admission fee is charged. The fact that the church or one of its members may have purchased a copy of the film or videotape makes no difference. To avoid breaching the "public performance" prohibition in the Copyright Act, you must in each instance secure the copyright owner's permission or alternatively obtain an "umbrella license" from the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation. To learn more about umbrella license, contact the MPLC at 1-800-462-8855 or visit them on the web at www.mplc.com.

Video Clip Lesson – The Wizard of OZ (ending)

Written by Diane Venzera

"The Wizard of Oz"

Lesson Focus

The power always was within me.

Clip begins at 1 hour - 32 minutes, 35 seconds

The gang has just returned to OZ after melting the Wicked Witch of the West. They brought her broom back to the Wizard and they want him to honor his promise to send them home. He tells them to come back tomorrow. They are upset with this answer and while Dorothy is arguing with him Toto pulls back a curtain and reveals a man operating the controls for the Wizard. He tells them to "pay no attention to the man behind the curtain" but they figured it out anyway. He finally confesses that he is the "Great and Powerful Oz" and that he is really a balloonist from Kansas that drifted to Oz when his balloon got away from him. They thought he was a wizard so he accepted the role. He agrees to give the gang what they want.

To the Scarecrow: He says that only thing great thinkers have that he doesn't is a University Degree. So, he gives him a THD, Doctor of Thinkology. The Scarecrow now knows he is smart.

To the Cowardly Lion: He talks about what the Lion believes about himself, that he runs from danger and that is not necessarily bad. He says that there is a difference between courage and wisdom and not to confuse the two. He says he is a hero but the one thing he doesn't have is a medal so he bestows one upon him. Now that his courage has been recognized the Lion can believe it.

To the Tin Man: He says that his heart is as big as all the "good-deed-doers" but what he doesn't have is a testimonial so the Wizard gives him one. He tells him that a "heart is not judged by how much you love but how much you are loved by others."

Dorothy knows that the Wizard has nothing in the bag for her – so the Wizard decides to take her back to Kansas in his balloon. All of Emerald City is there watching the balloon - Dorothy, Toto and the Wizard are ready to go. The Wizard leaves the Scarecrow in charge with the other helping. Just as they are about to lift off, Toto jumps out of Dorothy's arms, Dorothy follows and the balloon lifts off. The Wizard has no way to control it and Dorothy is very sad. She is welcome to stay in Oz but she wants to go home. Then all of a sudden Glenda comes. Dorothy asks her for help. Glenda tells her, **"You don't need to be helped any longer. You have always had the power to go back to Kansas."** Glenda hadn't told her before because Dorothy would not have believed her. She had to find out for herself. Glenda asked her what she had learned and Dorothy responded: **"It wasn't enough to want to see her family...if she is looking for her heart's desire again she won't look further than her own back yard, because if it is not there she never lost it to begin with."**

Glenda then tells her the magic slippers will take her home. Dorothy says good-bye, closes her eyes, clicks her heels together 3 times and says, "There's no place like home..." When she opens her eyes she finds herself back with her family.

Clip ends at 1 hour - 44 minutes – 36 seconds

Discussion Questions...

- ◆ What is happening in the story?
- ◆ What does the Scarecrow believe about himself?
- ◆ What does he want?
- ◆ What does the Wizard tell him and give him?
- ◆ What changes does that cause in the Scarecrow?
- ◆ What does the Cowardly Lion believe about himself and what does he want?
- ◆ What does the Wizard tell him and give him?
- ◆ How does the Cowardly Lion change?
- ◆ What does the Tin Man believe about himself and what does he want?
- ◆ What does the Wizard tell him and give him?
- ◆ What happens to the Tin Man?
- ◆ What is a common thought among these 3 main characters?
- ◆ What was their life like because of what they were thinking?
- ◆ How does what you think affect your life?
- ◆ When Dorothy missed leaving in the balloon how did she feel?
- ◆ What did she believe?
- ◆ What did Glenda tell her?
- ◆ How have you been like Dorothy?
- ◆ What powers do you have within that you need to start using?

Which character are you most like? Create a picture or a story telling about it.

Exploring through Music & Movement

It is said that music is a universal language. No matter where you are from or what language you speak – music is something that we can all relate to. From the wild beat of Latin music to the soothing sounds of classical, music has the ability to put us into a different state of mind. How many of us use music to express our moods and our feelings. Create lessons that involve music are lessons that everyone can relate to.

God's Children Sing

By Denny Balish

God's Children Sing, a component of Musikgarten, is an early childhood music and movement program designed to awaken and develop the children's inborn joy and talent for making music centered within their spiritual community.

Through music, movement, story-telling and praying experiences of adults and children together, the faith of both can be enriched.

Sample Lesson:

The children, ages 2 to 6 years, sit quietly in a circle, eyes bright in anticipation, as we light a candle and sing:

"I can light a candle,
God can make a star.
Both of them are helpful
Shining as they are."

A deep sense of reverence settles upon the class as we greet the day, the Earth, God's creatures and one another. As the tempo picks up we find ourselves spreading our light and love while joyously dancing, singing, and making music together. We move with hoops, dance with scarves, play instruments, tell stories and praise God.

After an energetic circle-dance which brought gleeful laughter, we wiggle ourselves to the floor and sing, "All day, all night, Angels watching over me my Lord..." which calms the mind and quiets the body. This leads us into our Sharing Circle where we, one at a time, while holding a beautiful, carved angel, share something special with the class and/or with God. One boy, his eyes softly closed in though said, "I'm blessed because I have so much love in my heart."

We come together for a moment of quiet reflection and sing, "God Is So Good" as the children snuggle together quietly. As the song ends, I place the lit candle in the center of the circle and lead the children in our closing prayer:

"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."

The children eagerly blow out the candle as we all affirm God's presence in our lives.

For information about the God's Children Sing" program contact, **Musikgarten at 800-216-6864**

Exploring through Games and Active Learning

Using games and familiar activities gives the students the opportunity to learn by doing. The characteristics of active learning are:

Source: "Do It! Active Learning in Youth Ministry" by Thom & Joani Schultz

Characteristics:

- 1. It is an adventure.** You cannot predict what will happen one a person or group embarks on the journey. It is full of surprises. The kids will learn lessons the teacher never envisioned. The teacher trusts the students to help create the learning experience. We must be prepared to seize teachable moments.
- 2. It is fun and/or captivating.** Many people assume that fun and learning cannot happen at the same time. But if young people find the lesson boring, they are probably not learning. Or if they are learning, the lesson will not stay with them. The ability to absorb knowledge and insight comes from God. If we only talk about forgiveness but never help our students have an experience of it – is the lesson really learned?
- 3. It involves everyone.** There are no passive spectators. Even if the children choose not to participate they will be influenced in some way by watching the events unfold.
- 4. It is student-based, not teacher-based.** Active learning depends on students making discoveries, rather than teachers imparting facts and ideas. Active learning starts with students and moves at their pace. It allows for unplanned topics to emerge. Teachers make discoveries right along with the students.
- 5. It is process-oriented.** In passive learning the teacher delivers a lesson and expects the kids to remember it. In active learning involves the students. How they arrive at the answer is an important as the answer itself because they discover the reasons behind the conclusions they draw. We can preach about cooperation or we can involve them in a cooperative exercise.
- 6. It is focused through debriefing.** Evaluating the experience by discussing it helps focus the experience and articulate its meaning. Through debriefing the teacher helps the students to apply it to their lives.
- 7. It is relational.** Because active learning involves everyone and because all experiences are debriefed with other people, students must interact with each other.

Debriefing the Experience

In order to help the students to get the most from their experience, you must help them interpret their experience. Active learning takes on power when we reflect on the experience.

During debriefing we ask:

- ◆ **Reflection Questions:** What just happened here? How did you feel?
- ◆ **Interpretation Questions:** How can we learn from it? What does it mean to you?
- ◆ **Application Questions:** How will we be different because of it? What will you do about it?

Some students will learn without debriefing but debriefing allows the students to verify their conclusions and measure them against other kids' perceptions.

Exploring through Art & Creative Activities

Creating art based on the stories we have experienced draws us more deeply into the story and allows us to discover how the story is playing out in our lives. When we invite the students to look beyond appearances and literal meanings, we help them to engage their imaginations.

There are many ways to use art as a creative experience.

Some ideas from Joanne Ramseyer, MA, ATR, LCPC

- After reading a story, invite the students to choose the part of the story that had the most meaning to them and create an art piece around it.
- As a group, invite each person to illustrate a piece of the story using torn tissue paper and thinned glue. When complete, put the pieces together and retell the story.
- Invite them to create new illustrations for an old story.
- Read a story almost to the end and invite the students to create art pieces that tell different possible endings.
- Create a booklet in response to any story.
- Create masks or puppets in order to retell the story.
- Illustrate different emotions.
- Create a new environment for the characters.
- Invite the students to create an image of one of the teachings in the story.

Most of the above activities use very basic supplies and can be very open ended so the students can make their own decisions about what they want to create.

Students of any age can do these activities because we are not looking for a certain quality of work, but rather using the process of creating the art for self-discovery.

Exploring through Food Activities

What better way to help students recall Bible stories and Spiritual principles than to connect them with food. How many of you are immediately transported back to a wonderful memory upon just the smell of certain foods. Using food and creativity helps make the lessons and principles real it is something the students enjoy doing.

A Blessing Picnic

Story: Feeding the 5000

The purpose of this activity is to share our food and blessings with one another.

Supplies: *Large table cloth; Long, thin French bread loaves, 1 for every 8 students; Sandwich fillings of your choice; Sharp knife; Juice box, 1/student; Paper plates, 1/student; Napkins, 1/student*

Action

- Tell the children that we are going to prepare a feast together.
- Invite them to help you spread out the table cloth.
- Bring out the long loaves of bread and the sandwich fillings.

- Create one or two long sandwiches, *(Create the number needed to feed your group. Involve children in creating the sandwich if possible.)*
- Once that is complete pass out the paper plates and napkins
- Pray a meal blessings or ask one of the children to do it.
- Then, with a look of surprise on your face and exaggerated voice, **say**, “Oh my, we only have one (or two, etc) sandwiches and we have so many of you to feed! What shall we do so everyone can eat? *(Accept all answers.)*
- *(Before slicing up the sandwich, lead them in the following.)*
- **Say:** “Let’s do what Jesus did. Let’s all sit down and focus on our inside God.” *(All sit if they are not already seated.)* “Let’s give thanks for all the blessings we have.” *(Invite each child to name something they are grateful for.)* “And let’s affirm that there is plenty for everyone.” *(“Break” the bread by cutting it into smaller pieces so there is enough for everyone.)* “Let’s all enjoy our bountiful meal!”
- Pass out the juice for all to enjoy.

Discussion

- What was this experience like for you?
- What did you discover about being thankful?

Exploring through Scientific Experiments

The use of science experiments helps to ground abstract principles in concrete learning.

Which Way Do I Go?

The purpose of this activity is to explore the idea that God is always there to give us direction.

Supplies: *Styrofoam Pads; Round plastic containers, 1/person; Modeling clay; Toothpicks, 1/person; 4 or 5 Bar magnets; Sewing needle, 1/person; Tape; Water*

Prepare Ahead: Cut the Styrofoam pads into 3 inch circles, 1/child.

Action

- Invite the children to attach a lump of modeling clay to the inside bottom of the plastic container. Insert the toothpick into the clay.
- Stoke one end of the needle with the magnet about 30 times, in one direction only.
- Tape the needle to the Styrofoam disk and rest the disk on top of the toothpick.
- Fill the container with water.
- When the water reaches the disk, the disk will float and turn. One end of the needle will point north. Mark this end.
- As you move around the room, the needle will swing around and always point north.

Discussion

- Think of God as the north pole - what does our inner compass direct us to do?
- How can this compass be a reminder that God is always there?
- How can you keep our thoughts focused on God?
- How are our lives blessed when we follow our internal guidance system?

Exploring through Object Lessons

“Object Lessons are *Visual Analogies*. “It is using familiar objects to explain unfamiliar ideas, usually abstract principles. Many hard-to-understand truths can be symbolized by easy-to-understand objects.” *Information from: "The Joyful Child" & "Nurturing Spirituality in Children" by Peggy Jenkins and other sources.*

You can use Object Lessons at any time. Here are some ideas using common objects.

Beads & String

1. Diversity: The string is God and the beads are people and when you put all the different people together, they form one unified presence.
2. Where one or two are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.
3. Lay your problems on God and He holds it all together.
4. Looking at the hole that goes through the bead: We all have room for God (the string) to fill us with His love, which makes the connection stronger.
5. Looking at all of the supplies: How so many things can work together to make a final product.
6. Have 2 containers of beads – one an assortment and the other all the same. Talk about how interesting diversity is.

Carbon Paper

1. Shows how God reflects in our life.
2. Thoughts we hold in mind are reproduced in our lives.
3. God expresses through you to someone else.
4. We keep the original copy of every thought we send out.
5. We don't have to see it to know it is expressing somehow.

Hammer

1. Can be used to make a point (hitting the nail on the head) or can represent missing the point (not hitting the mark.)
2. Can be used to remove things that are no longer needed.
3. Can be used to build up or to destroy. It is our choice
4. It can be used to close something or to pry something open.
5. It has many different parts and each has an important function.
6. Just as we can direct our aim with the hammer we can also do so with our thoughts.

Magnets

1. What do we attract into our lives?
2. What pulls us towards things?
3. How to stick to one another through problems.
4. Sticking to your spiritual path and values.
5. Positive affirmations: I am like a magnet because I draw good things to myself. I attract positive things to my life.
6. What makes a magnet? Small or great attraction?
7. What pulled you away from your path this week?

Play dough

1. How we can shape thought, character, and Unity principles.
2. God accepts different forms.
3. God expressing through creativity.

Butterfly

1. Represents seasons & cycles – Birth, death, rebirth – in the flow of life.
2. How sometimes we go through a struggle to become whole – like the caterpillar struggles to be free of the cocoon.
3. How we judge ourselves – are we a butterfly or caterpillar?
4. We are attracted to the sweetness in life.

Building Blocks

1. Diversity: Different colors, shapes, uniqueness, balance – Used together creates something wonderful.
2. Sum of the whole is greater than its parts.
3. More than one way to accomplish things.
4. The possibilities are endless.
5. We are always expanding in our understanding of what we can create.
6. Each block has its own function – they are all equal.
7. They aren't functional until you use them, like our talents.
8. We need to work together.
9. If they are knocked down they can always be built back up.
10. Stronger when you build the second time – learning from experience.

Basket with Leggo Pieces

1. When some part of your life is in pieces, like the leggos, how would you handle this? It appears that, at first, there is no way to put the pieces back the way they were. However, the basket represents God and his presence always encircling and enfolding every part of our lives. If we let go of worrying over the separate pieces and let God take charge and get peaceful and quiet within ourselves, God will give us the wisdom and power to create something new.