

# JOURNEY IN... YEAR ONE

## THE NATURE OF GOD

### KINESTHETIC

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- God, that of many names and beyond all naming, is One.
- Individuals are entitled to their own image of God.

Lesson Materials

- Blindfolds, one for every student
- Long rope
- Big blanket
- A 'Substitute Elephant' - a large, complicated object that students can explore tactilely. Here are some suggestions:
  - A "Big Wheel" tricycle (on its side or upside down)
  - A rocking horse
  - An uprooted shrub (on a tarp)
  - A lifesize child doll
  - A scarecrow
  - A pup tent
  - A musical instrument (not a valuable one) like a cello or a guitar.
  - A unique piece of furniture

#### TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Readings for you, the teacher:

You can't tell when this will happen. Usually, we act as if we were autonomous, independent beings. But occasionally – at a waterfall, on a walk, hugging someone we love – we glimpse a trace of infinity. Something inside us remembers the oneness.

- Daniel C. Matt in *God and The Big Bang*

The great religious are the ships,  
Poets, the life boats.  
Every sane person I know  
has jumped overboard!

That's good for business, isn't it, Hafiz?

- Hafiz, 13th century poet

Questions for your reflection:

- When have you glimpsed a 'trace of infinity'? When are you most attuned to the oneness of God or Truth?
- Have you jumped overboard a ship of religion? Have you clung to the lifeboat of poetry? What of your experience would you wish for these children to live in their lives? What would you spare them?

#### GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5 minutes

- Children should find a spot around the mystery Elephant.
- If the children have already rotated through the story or drama workshop, ask them to retell you the story.

### **TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON**

- Because students will likely discuss this activity with their family and church friends, you may need to come up with a new 'Elephant' for each of the six Sundays in this rotation.
- If the object's continued presence is too distracting during the Wondering, consider removing it and replacing it with a lit candle.
- Canvas floor labyrinths can be rented from a variety of sources. It's a wonderful intergenerational activity to create a labyrinth as a congregation. Most labyrinths

### **YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES**

- If the children have not been through either story or drama and this is their first workshop, give them the blindfolds and ask them to guess what they might be doing together.

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE BLINDFOLDED PHILOSOPHERS AND THE SUBSTITUTE ELEPHANT**

🕒 25 minutes

- This activity requires advance set-up.
- Create a circle (or oblong or whatever shape necessary) of rope on the floor, one large enough to contain your "Substitute Elephant" while keeping students at enough of a distance to prevent their feeling too much of the object. The rope will become a tactile boundary that only hands and arms may cross. Place the object in the center and cover it with a blanket. Put signs up that say 'No Peeking' if you need to.
- Mark sitting spots around the rope circle using pieces of tape. Once a child picks a spot, he or she must not move from it.
- Each child should put on a blindfold. Help them if necessary. Tell them that the activity will be much more fun and interesting if they don't peek.
- When all of your philosophers are blind for the moment, tell them that you're going to remove the blanket and give them 3-5 minutes to explore the 'Elephant' with their sense of touch only. They should do this quietly. They may only touch what they can reach without moving.
- As exploring winds down and students are tempted to 'scooch' around for an extended feel, ask them to bring their hands back to their lap. Going around the circle, as each student (who may touch again at his or her turn) to describe what they feel to the group. They may guess at what it is if they like, but don't let the game become a contest. Encourage the kids to listen closely to each other's description before they try to come up with a guess by consensus. Allow for discussion, reminding the children of the ways we can respectfully disagree with other ideas.

### **Wondering together :**

- Take the blanket off the object. Encourage brief discussion and then ask for a quiet transition to God-Wondering. In a minute of silence, ask students to go back and relive the experience of touching the object and sharing in their mind's eye.
- Ask some prompting questions and allow the discussion to develop:

**YOUR FIELD  
EXPERIENCES:  
FEEDBACK AND  
NOTES**

- What if the thing under the blanket were God?
- I wonder what senses you've used to experience God.
- I wonder how this experience is like our spiritual lives?
- If the group seems inclined, have them imagine (eyes open or closed) that God was the thing they were trying to describe to their friends. Going around the group, ask each child to describe the part of God that he or she has felt in his or her life.

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO  
LABYRINTH WALKING**

🕒 20 minutes

- Labyrinths are an ancient tool used for prayer and meditation. You should allow the children to experience the labyrinth in two ways: walking it and respectfully watching others walk it. Labyrinths represent our journey toward truth.
- The guidelines for walking the labyrinth are simple:
  - Labyrinths are generally walked in silence. Some people are praying or thinking deeply while walking.
  - Walk at your own pace. It is not a race. You should be mindful of every step. If you walk too fast and can never look up, the labyrinth will be unpleasant and make you dizzy.
  - If you meet or overtake someone on the path, do whatever is respectful and comes naturally to you. It's okay to step around people, but only carefully and respectfully.
- In this cycle of six lessons, we've talked about looking for the truth, about being on a path toward God. You don't need to be explicit about this, but might think of ways to gently encourage the children to connect this walking to the journey we all make. Invite them to imagine that this labyrinth walk is a path to God.
- Devise a quiet signal to indicate to a child that they may begin walking. You might greet them with a namaste-style nod or hand them a pebble to hold on the walk. Pace the walking to allow for space in between each walker.

**Wondering Together**

- Did we end up in different places or in one place?
- Were there any wrong paths? Do you think there are any wrong paths to God?
- What did you think about while you walked?
- How did you treat people you met on the path? How do you think different people should treat each other when they are looking for God?

**YOUR FIELD  
EXPERIENCES:  
FEEDBACK AND  
NOTES**

**CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

- Gather the children in a circle or cluster. Holding hands is a warm gesture of connection; do so if the children feel so inclined. Allow for a moment of silence.

You can ask the children to listen to your reading of this meditative blessing. They can repeat the words in their mind, or aloud, or you can ask them to read it from a written copy in chorus with one another.

*May we remember that we are already One.*

*May we remember that God is already One.*

*May we each travel our path toward the One Truth  
with hope and respect for every other traveler.*

*May it be so and Amen.*