

JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

THE NATURE OF GOD

BODY

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- God is the Great Mystery
- While our hearts and minds help us to collect clues about God, part of God will always remain unknowable.

Lesson Materials

- Floor puzzle(s) – the box top or any image of the puzzle must not be in the room.
- Mystery feeling box: a box with a fabric cover that conceals the contents
- Mystery objects: safe objects to fill up the Mystery feeling box
- Timer or hourglass

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

As I plunge deeper, in fits and starts, seeking to penetrate the mystery of life and God, the mystery grows. It grows in wonder, power, moment, and depth. There are times, many times, when God is not with me, times of distraction, fragmentation, alienation, and brokenness. But when I open myself to God, incrementally my wholeness is restored. Perhaps that which I call God is no more than the mystery of life itself. I cannot know, nor do I care, for the power that emanates from deep within the heart of this mystery is redemptive. It is divine. Without hoping or presuming to understand it, opening myself to it, I find peace.

- Rev. Forrest Church

Wisdom and deep intelligence require an honest appreciation of mystery.

- Thomas Moore

The insight into the mystery of life, coupled though it be with fear, has also given rise to religion. To know what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms - this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness.

- Albert Einstein

When I was young, I said to God, 'God, tell me the mystery of the universe.' But God answered, 'that knowledge is for me alone.' So I said, 'God, tell me the mystery of the peanut.' Then God said, 'Well, George, that's more nearly your size.'

-George Washington Carver

Questions for reflection:

- How do you define your experience of and your relationship to Mystery?
- Where does 'what I know for sure' leave off for you and the unknowable pick up?
- Do you love to read and watch mysteries? Why?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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GATHERING AND FOCUSING

⌚ 2-3 minutes

How does a mystery story or movie make your body feel? Has anyone ever been so excited about a story that they got goosebumps? What does it feel like? Can you imagine anyone ever having goosebumps at church?

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE
GIANT FLOOR PUZZLE**

⌚ 15-20 minutes

We have a giant floor puzzle that we'll work together to assemble. Be sure that everyone has a role by assigning jobs (edge team, corner team, etc) or by giving each child a few pieces that he or she must place when the time comes. Neither teachers nor children will see the box cover or any image of the finished puzzle. The children will also discover that a few pieces are missing from the puzzle. You can conduct the Wondering Together discussion during or after the assembly.

Wondering Together

- How long do you think it took us to put our puzzle together?
- I wonder how not having the box affected our work of piecing together the puzzle?
- I wonder why there are pieces missing? How does it make you feel to find that a puzzle is missing pieces.
- I wonder how putting a puzzle together is kind of like coming to church...
- What can puzzles teach us about God?
- I wonder if anyone has ever seen the box top of God's Great Mystery Puzzle?
- What can the missing pieces help us learn about God?
- Do you think anyone will ever solve the puzzle of God's mystery?
- How do you feel when you think that maybe there are pieces about God that you will never know?

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO
MYSTERY FEELING BOX**

⌚ 15-20 minutes

We'll take turns feeling inside a box whose contents can't be seen. Some of the objects will be obvious, others more of a mystery. Let the kids know that you, the teacher, have never seen the contents of the box, so

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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it's just as much a mystery to you as to them.

- Use a timer or an hourglass to set a limit on "turns".
- Encourage each child to describe their mysterious experience out loud for the class.
- Make it a goal to find something that we just can't identify. Tell us as much as you can feel about it. Maybe on their next turn, someone will feel it again and will get us closer to figuring it out.

Wondering Together

- I wonder how many different things were in the box?
- How did you feel when you put your hand in the box? How did you feel when you watched someone else put their hand in the box?
- I wonder if someone touched everything in the box or if there was a sneaky object that never got touched. Can we know for certain?
- I wonder how this mystery feeling box is like the experience of the Great Mystery that we call God?
- I wonder how this box is different from the mystery of God?
- Do you ever feel the mystery of God right in your own body? What is that like for you?

GATHERING AND REFLECTING

⌚ Any remaining time

If you have some extra time, you can fill it with some of the following:

- Discussion: What are some things about your body that seem mysterious? Does it do anything strange or make weird noises (be prepared for demonstrations) or accomplish amazing things?
- Yoga: Pull some poses from the Yoga Deck and do them together. To add some mystery, don't tell the kids the name of the pose. Have them guess.

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

⌚ 2 minutes

Invite the class to sit in a circle for the closing. You can read the lines of the closing below and the children can respond in unison: *It's a mystery!*

Where did the Universe come from?

It's a mystery! (repeat after each question)

Where is the Universe going?

What is God?

Why does my brain keep wondering?

Why is it a Mystery?