

Lesson from a Book: *In God's Name*

by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, illustrated by Phoebe Stone, *Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994*

Synopsis of story:

After God created the world, everything had a name: the rocks, the plants, and the animals. But no one knew the name for God. Everyone came up with a name depending on their place in life and their unique relationship with God. Some called God “Mother,” some “Father,” some “Maker of Peace.” The trouble started when people believed that they each had the perfect name for God. They bickered and fought until one day they all came together around a lake that reflected each of their images back to them. “At that moment, the people knew that all the names for God were good, and no name was better than another. Then . . . they called God One.”

Lesson plan age level:

Roughly ages 3–9.

Lesson focus:

1. There are many paths to God. They should each be honored.
2. One's image of God can be broadened by listening to others.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Opening:

Introductions should be made if there are new children, and an opportunity to share what has happened to each during the week.

Bible passage:

Read the first chapter of Genesis (the creation story). Use any Bible translation in simple English, or read it in the child-friendly language of “God Makes a World” (pp. 10–12) in *The Family Story Bible*, by Ralph Milton, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

The story:

Each child able to read may read a portion. The teacher and/or older children may need to assist some readers.

Wonderings and discussion questions:

1. I wonder what you like the best about this story.
2. Was there an image of God in the book that felt close to your personal image of God? Mother? Father? Protector? Creator of Peace?
3. I wonder why people argued about their names for God.
4. In the story some people were very critical of others' religions. Why do you think this was so? Are there times when you are critical of others' practices or beliefs?
5. When did the people in the story begin to accept one another? (wait for responses) I wonder what we might do to bring people together so we get to know each other and become more accepting of one another.

Activity suggestions:

1. *Images of God*. Provide a wide range of art materials and paper. Invite each child to express an image of God

that has meaning for him or her. Give people freedom to express their images any way they like—such as abstractly, with symbols or through pictures. Let the creative energy soar!

2. *Re-enact the story*. Ask individuals to each argue for an image of God. If you have enough time, you may want to make simple puppets using paper plates and tongue depressors or paper bags. Have everyone come together around a large mirror to represent the lake. Instruct everyone to call out their name for God at the same time. Then follow up with the name, One.
3. Give each child a small mirror with these words taped to the back: “I see God in me, I see God in Thee.” Type up some affirmations and have them cut them out and tape them onto their mirrors. Examples are: “I am strong,” “I am powerful” (a big hit with my 3 year old.), “I use my power to help others,” “I am creative,” “I can solve problems,” and “I am a strong team player.”

Closing:

Close with a song or with a short period of reflective silence.

NOTE: Rabbi Sasso is an interesting woman. She was the second woman to be ordained as a rabbi (1974) and the first rabbi to become a mother. She has a number of books in print. They are all excellent as a classroom and family resource. QuakerBooks of FGC carries most of her books.

Lesson prepared by Robin Wells, Ashville Friends Meeting, SAYMA, for the Religious Education Committee of FGC.