

Lesson from a Book: *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*

by Douglas Wood, watercolors by Jon J. Muth, Scholastic Press, 2003

Synopsis of story : This is a fable about a world full of suffering and violence in which a child, seeking a remedy to the chaos, visits a wise old turtle who explains the fragmentary nature of her people's truth. The child returns to her people and finds a way to mend the "broken truth," resulting in wholeness and healing for all of creation.

Lesson plan age level:

Adult

Lesson focus:

Peace, community, and the nature of truth. This book and lesson could be used within a unit on world religions or on one or more of the traditional Friends testimonies.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Opening:

Ask each participant to write on a colorful self-adhesive note pad something about truth as they have experienced it. Then invite participants to introduce themselves one at a time by giving their name, reading what they wrote and then posting their pieces of paper on a blackboard or wall so that the pieces of paper collectively form the shape of the letter "T."

Quotation:

Read the poem "Journey of the Magi," by T. S. Eliot, and/or John 8:32: "and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (NRSV).

The story:

Read aloud *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth* or, if there are several copies available, have participants share copies and read silently.

Discussion questions:

1. How does this story impact you?
2. In the fable there is language suggesting that the people had a "we/they" type of thinking in relation to truth. Who are the "theys" in our/your world, and how do we/you relate to the "other?"

3. The story says “. . . those who take a great journey of the heart are changed.” How has your understanding of the truth changed in your spiritual journey? Has this change affected the ways you live and love in the world? If so, how?

4. The fable relates how healing a broken truth brought about a healing of relationships. The Bible passage we heard connects truth with freedom. What connections do you see between half truths, unhealthy relationships and bondage? between truth, right relationships and freedom?

Activities:

Invite participants to write one or two cherished truths on paper, one truth per piece of paper, and give them to the facilitator. The facilitator cuts or tears each piece in half and puts them in different parts of the room. Working cooperatively, participants then find the pieces, put them back together, read them out loud and decide which truths they share, or would like to share, in common.

Closing:

Unprogrammed worship.

Follow up project:

After this lesson, especially if it is part of a whole unit on a related theme, participants may want to consider a service project designed to bring together people from different backgrounds or faith traditions. For example, the meeting community could visit a mosque (call and make arrangements first) or invite Muslims to the meetinghouse for refreshments and mutual sharing on a topic, such as “the meaning of prayer in my life.”

This lesson plan is based on a lesson outline submitted by Jim Rose, Cynthia Schmidt, Suzanne Siverling and Michael Gibson for the FGC Religious Education Committee.

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