

Lesson 7: Peace – Buddhist Story

A very happy Mother's Day to all of our mothers and mother-figures out there! And welcome back to our Via Transformativa Peace unit!

This week, we have a peace-related story from the Buddhist tradition. This story was actually told by the Buddha, himself, as a parable for his followers. He thought they had disrespected one of his closest and most valued disciples, so he shared this story as a teaching tool.

For the Nurture Program kids, we usually start with an introduction to Buddhism. Many of them are familiar with Tibetan Buddhism and the practice of sitting meditation from their visits to Urban Dharma, but here are a few points you can make.

- Buddhists follow the teachings of the Buddha. He was a real person who lived about 2,500 hundred years ago. We like to let kids guess these kinds of numbers by playing the higher/lower game until they get to 2,500. For older kids, you can point out that this would have been about 500 years before the time of Jesus.
- "Buddha" is a title that means "Awakened One." It was bestowed on the man, Siddhartha Gautama, to indicate that he achieved full enlightenment in that lifetime.
- The Buddha lived in the northeastern part of India, so we often ask the kids to point out India on a world map. His teachings then spread throughout Asia - southeast to places like Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka and northeast to places like China, Korea, and Japan. Older kids might know where some of these places are on a world map, too. If not, this is a great time to show them!
- Two important Buddhist practices are sitting meditation and listening to teachings offered by gurus or lamas.
- Urban Dharma is an example of a Tibetan Buddhist temple. They tend to have lots of statues, incense, and other ritual objects. They are also known for their prayer flags and sand mandalas. (Many Nurture program kids have made prayer flags for the Celebration Center over the years, and some of them have also made their own sand mandalas.)

- Zen Buddhism is a less ornate version of Buddhism. A good example here in Asheville is Great Tree Zen Temple. Zen practitioners often meditate facing a wall, and altars are much more simple and plain.

Stories/Readings

One of the Buddhist peace stories we share with the kids at Jubilee! is the story of the Four Harmonious Friends. This story is incredibly popular, particularly in Bhutan and Tibet. Because it has been told so many times - over both time and place - there are many different versions. In its original telling, the Buddha mentioned only three animals, but most modern versions include four animals: an elephant, a monkey, a rabbit/hare, and a bird (often a partridge).

If you want to read the story aloud, here are couple of options.

[Version 1](#)

[Version 2](#)

If you prefer a video, try one of these three. (They're in English. 😊)

[Video 1](#)

[Video 2](#)

[Video 3](#)

Craft

Depictions of this story are found all over the place. If you conduct an image search on "Four Harmonious Friends," you'll see what I mean.

Below, you'll find our version. Simply print out the page and let the kids color it. They can also add an image of a tree and other features - like a sun, flowers, grass, etc.

With older kids, we usually make a *thangka* (TAHN-kuh), which is a Tibetan scroll painting. On the left, you'll see a *thangka* that's for sale on the internet. On the right, you'll see a *thangka* made by one of our Middle School tweens.



For the DIY thangka, simply draw the image on a piece of inexpensive cloth using fabric markers or permanent Sharpie-type markers. Leave a few inches of undecorated fabric near the top.

Once finished, roll the extra fabric around the wooden dowel a few times and hold it in place using liquid glue. A piece of string/yarn/ribbon connecting the two ends of the dowel allows for easy hanging!

