

A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus

I Am the Way

Adapted by:
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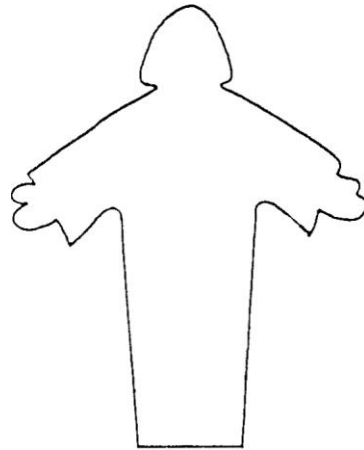
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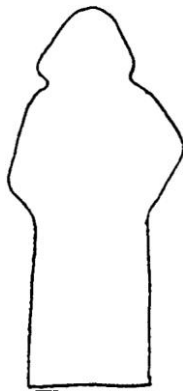
I AM THE WAY ... MA TERIALS

- medium basket to hold
- wooden Jesus figure
- three wooden disciple figures
- laminated "path" card

Disciple



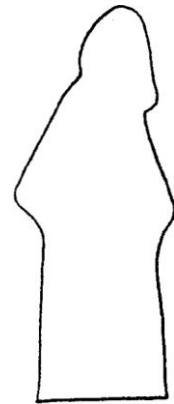
Jesus



Thomas



Philip



I AM THE WAY JOHN 14:1-14

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story basket from the shelf and return to the circle.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Jesus figure toward at the center of the storytelling area.

Rest your hand lightly on the Jesus figure.

Place three disciple figures next to Jesus.

Lift your hand, palm up, to indicate God's house.

Move Jesus a short distance from the disciples.

Move Jesus back to the disciples.

Touch the Jesus figure as you speak.

Move Thomas closer to Jesus.

Place the "Path" card in front of the figures.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make it your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me I will find all the words to this story of God's people.

Jesus spent much of his time on earth helping people understand who he was.

When they wondered if Jesus was really the Savior, the Messiah, he told them about himself in different ways.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't worry. Have faith in me and in God.

There are many rooms in the Father God's house. I wouldn't tell you this if it wasn't true.

I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. After that I will come back and take you with me.

Then we will be together.

You know the way to where I am going."

But Thomas, one of the disciples said, "Lord we don't even know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus answered him, "I am the way, the truth and the life! Without me no one can go to the Father God"

Touch Thomas as you speak Jesus words.

Nod your head as you speak.

Move Philip closer to Jesus.

Touch the Philip figure briefly.

Touch Jesus as you speak.

Hold out both hands, palms up, as you ask the question.

Lift one hand, palm up, to indicate God.

Move your open palm down to touch Jesus.

Use no actions as you speak this sentence.

Place all the wooden figures in the basket one at a time.

The Jesus said, "If you had known me you would have know the Father God, too.

But, from now on you do know God and you have seen God."

Then Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father God. That is all we need."

Jesus told him, "Philip, I have been with you for a long time. Don't you know who I am?

If you have seen me, you have seen the Father God.

Don't you believe that I am one with the Father God and the Father God is one with me?

I don't just say things on my own. God who lives in me does these things.

So, have faith in me when I say that the Father God is one with me and I am one with the Father God.

Or, if you want, have faith in me simply because of the things I do.

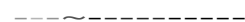
WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder why there are different rooms where God is?

I wonder if Jesus was more God or more a man?

I wonder why it's so hard to have faith?

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.



After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Dismiss the children when everyone has had a chance to choose his/her work.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Let's begin.

I AM THE WAY ... TEACHER HELPS

As we have found through the other stories of the Teachings of Jesus, we again find the disciples not quite understanding what Jesus was saying to them. Jesus admonition not to worry begins our story. Located in the text after conversations about denial and betrayal, we can see a need for Jesus to direct the disciple's attention elsewhere (The New Bible Commentary: Revised, p. 958). So Jesus pointed the disciples both to God and to the future. In the Gospel of John Jesus addresses his divinity more than in any other gospel, in today's story Jesus came right out and proclaimed he and God basically one and the same. If the disciples knew him, the disciples knew God.

From our 21st century viewpoint and our Christian theology and Christology that seems so basic. We have long held the teaching that Jesus was the son of God and therefore had some of the same characteristics as God, particularly divinity. But for the disciples who had walked with Jesus for three years the concept of Jesus being divine in any way was difficult. In addition, the Jewish understanding of what the Messiah would be was different than Jesus personified. They had been taught that the Messiah would be a king like David, or a prophet like Elijah or a priest like Moses or perhaps some combination of all three. The Messiah was to be the warrior who would lead them into battle to take back their land. Jesus didn't quite fit those ideas. It wasn't essential to their beliefs that the Messiah be a divine being. Anyone could become the Messiah. God could call anyone at anytime and give them the gifts and powers necessary. So when the disciples considered Jesus concepts of being one with the Father God and of being the Way or the path they were dealing on a spiritual level they felt uncomfortable.

One of the other difficulties with this text is what it says to Christians who have strong ecumenical beliefs. This text, and others in John, has separated people of different faiths for hundreds of years. The proclamation that Jesus is the only way into relationship with God has divided Christians, Jews, Muslims and other people of faith in, sometimes, violent ways, such as the Crusades. Don't be surprised if you face these questions from children. Each of you will have to determine where you stand on this statement. For this author, as a Christian, my way to God is through Jesus Christ. But since I am not God and do not profess to completely know the mind of God, I cannot say that our Creator has not created other ways for other people of faith Always remember that the conversation and struggle of faith is a rich journey that almost always results in growth in faith.

The first wondering question asks why there are many rooms where God is. Jesus made a particular point of saying to his disciples that God has much space for God's people. Some children think there are rooms for whole families, while others think there are different rooms for different ways of thinking. Remember that adults can't always articulate their thoughts on this and be grateful for the conversation with your children of God.

In the second questions we wonder if Jesus was more divine or more human, Hundreds of years of study led church leaders and scholars to determine that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. But I included this question to give children an opportunity to start talking about something that is a very difficult concept, yet one that children can approach. There will be disagreement among them, and one attempt at this question will not be enough. But as long as you respect each approach the discussion should be good.

The final question wonders why it's so hard to have faith. A few of the children may disagree and say that it's not hard to have faith. But most of them, as concrete thinkers, will probably say that it's because you can't see its results. Be aware that some of your youngest children will not even be able to define faith. A good way to begin with them is to ask them if they think their moms or dads or grandparents love them. If their answer is yes, you can tell them that they have faith that they are loved by that person, They can't see that love, but they know it because of what they have experienced,

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

In today's story Jesus told the disciples that his is the way and the truth and the light and that no one can go to God without him? What does that mean for people of other faiths, such as Jewish and Muslim people?

Jesus said to the disciples that if they knew him they knew God. How do you get to know God? Who in your life has helped you know God?

Jesus talks about the "way" almost as a path. What path are you following right now? Is it a "school" path? Or is it a "sports" or "social" path? How does God fit in that path?