

[PYCL: To be altered at the altar bring your “earthly all” (never part of you)!]

CedarS PYCLs--Possible Younger Class Lessons for:

"Doctrine of Atonement"

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[Bracketed inserts by Warren Huff]

[PYCL #1: Share how a good life springs from knowing & obeying what we know of God!] Been thinking this week about teaching this subject to kids. It's not really interesting to them theologically, nor from the Christian historical perspective. But isn't that kind of perfect in light of what Jesus taught us about atonement? His whole emphasis was that all that we do must be an expression of our true self-hood, of God's true nature, of our unity with our Maker. Everything proceeds from this law of goodness and Life. All else is a lie about man's nature and about God's. A good life does not proceed simply from following the laws of the land and being “nice”, or smart, or even hardworking. A good life springs from knowing and obeying what we know of God. This is something we can talk about with kids, and probably often learn from them as well.

[PYCL #2: Share the joy of letting nothing stop us from expressing what we know of God!] Maybe you can introduce the idea of what “sin” is. Really it can be explained as anything that seems like it comes between us and feeling God's love or presence. How do we feel Her presence? Ask them when they have felt really happy and content on a regular day. I'm not talking about Christmas day happy. What does it feel like to them when they do something like pick up after themselves without being asked and mom or dad notices and says, “Wow, thanks so much for doing that, that was a big help and I love you!” What does that feel like? Don't they feel just plain *good*? That is God's presence, the presence of Principle or Love. Most of us feel it every time we do something that is helpful, kind, thoughtful, unselfish, honest, orderly, intelligent, discerning... oh wait, what do those qualities come from? Aren't these qualities that reflect God, Love, Truth, Mind, Principle, etc.? Can you talk together about this fact, that our actions help us to understand God? This week's lesson really expands on this. Christ Jesus showed us by his *actions*, his demonstrations of God's presence. He was always conscious, aware of his Father's presence and activity in his life. So expand on this and talk about how we can feel our oneness with God, with Love, with Mind, and so on.

[PYCL #3: Be willing to sacrifice a material perception of things. Give the best, not a junker] If you have a smart phone you could show the kids what the definition of atonement says on dictionary.reference.com. I was interested to see that it includes what atonement means in Christian Science specifically, and they might find that cool too! Notice too on this site, that the archaic definition refers to the root of this word being “one”. Atonement is wrapped up with the idea of sacrifice, at least in the traditional theological definition. But for all of us we find that in order to feel our unity with God, we have to be willing to sacrifice our material perception of things. This is *true* sacrifice. The less we have of matter, the more we feel of Spirit. You can talk about the original way that people expressed their desire to be closer, to make amends to God, was to bring in animal or food sacrifices. Kids might think this is funny, but you can explain that these sacrifices had to represent their best animals and grains, not the weak, sick or injured ones. Imagine if we were required to sacrifice

something valuable to us today, say our best form of transportation. Would it be easy for us to give up our best family car? We might have to get a “junker” to drive. We wouldn't want to keep back from God our best thing, and get a junker to give to God right? They will probably see where this is going, and maybe they will have the foresight to ask why would God want your car anyway? Is God a great spiritual person that evaluates our deeds and takes note of what we “give” to Him or give up for Him? Atonement isn't about how God sees us... it's about our own understanding of how we relate to Him/Her as reflection, as one. Citation S6 tells us: “The atonement of Christ reconciles man to God, not God to man”. You will need to talk about the word “reconciles”. You can address how material sacrifice necessarily leads to less and less genuine sacrifice. People began to “cheat” and bring in their injured or sick animals, and the priests who accepted them would make up new rules for how many they needed in order to make up for the less than healthy nature of the offering. You can see how it would get more and more perverted after awhile.

[PYCL #4: Discuss the purifying blessings of fiery trials & refiner's fires. Share examples.] Now that you've introduced the idea of sacrifice, it might be interesting to talk about the spiritual significance of that word. Why did early cultures burn their sacrifices? (There are some things here that relate to the idea of the smoke going up to heaven where they thought gods resided, but I'm not talking about this). I'm thinking that spiritually this represents the idea of consuming the material nature of the animal or grain, making it “purely” spiritual. Also fire can symbolize the purification of something, often through a trial or challenging experience. The prophecy of Jesus came with the phrase that he would be like a “refiner's fire”. Talk about what fire does to some metals. Can they think of a “fiery” experience that helped them ultimately feel closer to God? Why would these experiences do this? Can you share an example from your own life?

[PYCL #5: Discuss stories to make points like being straight with men before seeking God.] There are good stories in this lesson that you can use to illustrate the need to see things spiritually in order to understand our unity with our Father-Mother. The story of the adulterous woman, and the healing of the palsied man, the simple command that if we are bringing a sacrifice to God, we'd best make sure we are straight with our brother/man before we try to find our unity with God, and so on. I'll let you work with these. But I seem to be running with the idea of sacrifice this week so here goes one last thought.

[PYCL #6: Bring your “earthly all” (never part of you) for Love to alter at the altar of Truth!] Mrs. Eddy uses the word altar (as in, the place where you lay a sacrifice), in four places in Science and Health. Two seem especially relevant to our work here. On p.55, “...whosoever layeth his earthly all on the altar of divine Science, drinketh of Christ's cup now, and is endued with the spirit and power of Christian healing.” [*reflected in CedarS metaphysical theme: “Put your whole self in”*] And on p.454, in the passage about the healing power of Love, she says: “Love is priestess at the altar of Truth.” Discuss the idea of what an altar is spiritually (what is it materially too). Is it something we can “build”? If so, how? Can we come up with a list of what we bring to the “altar of Truth”? Why does she use the synonym Truth here? Shouldn't whatever we bring, be purely from the heart, a genuine, honest longing to grow? (S8) Why is it brought before Love? Isn't that what Jesus taught us of God's nature? That God would never bring us pain, regret, unhappiness, sickness, or even death? Love meets us and envelopes us when we come to Her. For the

littler ones perhaps you can have them think about things they want to give up that never were really part of their nature that God made. In citation S6 she mentions that “Love and Truth are not at war with God's image and likeness.” Bring a mirror and hold it up to them.

Can they have a fight with their own reflection? Can they disagree with themselves? This is how it is with God and us. We are one! He can't give us sickness to “fight” with. He can't give us anger to fight with, and so on. When we sacrifice those qualities that represent a material view of self, we stop “warring” with our reflection, and we can rejoice in our unity with God.

Have a great Sunday!



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