

Peace for the World

Four Harmonious Friends (Buddhist Jataka Tale)

PREVIEW

- ✓ Review
- ✓ Background – Buddhism
- ✓ Lesson/Story
- ✓ Activity #1 – Telephone Game
- ✓ Creative Response – Story *Thangka* Craft (Smartphone Time)
- ✓ Activity #2 – Four Friends Fun
- ✓ Take-Home Opportunity –Peace for the Earth
- ✓ List of Previous Peace-Maker Lessons
- ✓ Images Provided – The Buddha; Jesus, Mary, Joseph; Story Illustration, *Thangkas*
- ✓ Handout of Readings

REVIEW

Briefly discuss last week's Take-Home Opportunity: Peace for the Animals. See if any of them shared peace with animals during the previous week.

Review 1-3 stories from the Peace-Makers section – maybe one or two stories about keeping people from fighting and one of the Jesus stories. The list of topics can be found on p. 102.

Prompt: Last week, we started talking about people who want peace for the entire world. Our first story was from the book of Isaiah. Anyone remember what that was about? [Answer]

Isaiah's Peaceful Kingdom (Jewish/Christian): Isaiah imagined what a peaceful kingdom and a peaceful leader might look like. He used unlikely animal pairs as examples (wolf/lamb, leopard/goat, cow/bear, lion/ox, baby/snake).

BACKGROUND – BUDDHISM

Supplies

World map

Prompt: Today, we'll continue with this idea of peace in the animal kingdom, but today's story comes from the Buddhist tradition. We talked very briefly about Buddhism a couple of weeks ago when we read a poem by the Buddhist monk, Bhuta Thera. The poem was about remaining calm even when a storm rages all around you. What do you know/remember about Buddhism? [Guess/Answer. They might remember that Buddhists follow the teachings of the Buddha and/or that some Buddhist

PEACE

BACKGROUND – BUDDHISM (cont.)

rituals – like praying, singing, lighting candles, and celebrating holy days – are similar to Christian rituals. They might know other things, as well.]

Prompt: The Buddha, like Jesus, was a real person who lived long ago. Guess how many years ago the Buddha lived. [Play the higher/lower game until they get to 2,500.]

Prompt: Jesus lived about 2,000 years ago, so the Buddha lived a few hundred years after Isaiah and about 500 years before Jesus. Anyone want to guess where the Buddha lived? [India. Make sure they know where India is on the world map.]

Prompt: From India, the Buddha's teachings spread to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea. [Show them (or let them find) these areas on the map.]

Prompt: Here is a picture of the Buddha. [Show image on p. 103.] Since there were obviously no cameras 2,500 years ago, no one knows exactly what the Buddha looked like, but this is how one artist imagined him.

Prompt: Why do you think the artist put a halo on the Buddha? [Answer = maybe to show that he was special or holy in some way]

Prompt: Have you ever seen pictures from the Christian tradition that show people with haloes? [Share – maybe they've seen pictures of angels, Jesus, or Mother Mary, with haloes.]

Prompt: Here's a painting of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph from about 700 years ago; they all have haloes. [Show image on p. 104.]

Prompt: Let's go back to our image of the Buddha. What else do you notice in this image? [Show image on p. 103 again – maybe that he is in nature, that he looks calm/peaceful, that he is meditating, etc.]

Prompt: We meditated a few weeks ago when we sat, calmly and peacefully, and focused on our breath. Remember that? Meditation is a big practice in the Buddhist tradition. People who regularly practice meditation often say meditation helps them remain calm and peaceful when everyday life gets stressful.

LESSON/STORY

Prompt: Before we read our Buddhist peace story for today, we're going to read the story that led to the story. This first reading is a story about the Buddha and one of his favorite disciples, Sariputta {sah-ree-puh-tuh}.

Read: The Buddha and Sariputta

Once upon a time, there was a man named Upatissa {oo (as in "moon")-pah-ti-suh}. He lived in India and was the oldest son in a family with many children. When Upatissa grew up, he decided to live the life of a holy man. He avoided the pleasures of the everyday world and focused his body, mind, and spirit on seeking the path to enlightenment.

Within a very short time, Upatissa learned all that his master had to teach. He began to look for another teacher, but he was having trouble finding a teacher who could answer all his questions about the deeper meaning of life.

LESSON/STORY (cont.)

One day, Upatissa saw a monk in the streets begging for his daily food. Upatissa was struck by the monk's dignified and serene appearance, so he asked the monk to share some of the teachings the monk had learned from his master. Upatissa immediately recognized the teachings as the ones he had been seeking. Soon, the monk led Upatissa to his master, who happened to be the Buddha.

Upatissa learned the Buddha's teachings thoroughly and deeply. Before long, the Buddha renamed him Sariputta {sah-ree-puh-tuh}, and he became one of the Buddha's closest, wisest, and most important disciples.

Sariputta was also known for being extremely humble. He would sweep, straighten things up, and even pick up trash. He never used his position in the Buddha's community, which was called a *sangha*, to avoid being helpful. Sariputta also regularly took care of the sick. He would visit them, bring them food, and find the medicines they needed. Sometimes, when he traveled with the Buddha, Sariputta would stay behind to make sure the older members of the group were taken care of.

One time, because he was assisting others, Sariputta met up with the Buddha and his other traveling companions quite late in the evening. By then, everyone had already taken the best sleeping quarters. Without giving it a second thought, Sariputta slept under a makeshift tent made of the monks' robes. When the Buddha discovered Sariputta's sparse sleeping conditions, the Buddha decided to share this story with his followers.

Reference

"The Life of Sariputta," compiled and translated from the Pali texts by Nyanaponika Thera. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel090.html>.

Prompt: So those are the events that led up to our peace story for today. Keep them in mind. Now, our peace story for today is special kind of story in the Buddhist tradition called a Jataka {JAH-tah-kah} tale. [Let them say that three times in a row really fast.]

Prompt: This Jataka tale is particularly special because it was told by the Buddha, himself. Jesus did the same thing; he told stories, often called parables, to teach his followers lessons, too.

Prompt: Also, many people say there is one very wise character in each Jataka tale that represents the Buddha. As we read this story try to think about two things: 1) what lesson the Buddha is trying to teach, and 2) which character might represent the Buddha.

[Note: Many Buddhists also claim, based on a belief in reincarnation, that this Buddha-like character represents a past life of the Buddha. Offering this explanation is optional.]

Read: Four Harmonious Friends – Version 1

[Note 1: In the Buddha's original teaching, there were only three animals, but most versions nowadays include four. The original teaching is found in Tittira Jataka #37. One translation can be found on the Sacred Texts web site at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j1/j1040.htm>.]

[Note 2: This story is written out in Reader's Theater format with six small parts: Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Elephant, Monkey, Hare, and Partridge.]

PEACE

LESSON/STORY (cont.)

Narrator 1: The Buddha, after seeing Sariputta sleeping under a makeshift tent, told a story about a partridge, a hare, a monkey, and an elephant. All four animals lived near a very large tree. Although they all regularly fed from the tree, they simply could not agree on who owned it.

Elephant: Clearly, my friends, this tree belongs to me because I was the one who saw it first.

Monkey: Actually, friends, this tree belongs to me. Long before the elephant first laid eyes on it, I climbed its lovely branches and ate its delicious fruit.

Hare: I'm sorry to say that both of you are mistaken. You see, I knew this tree back in the day when it was just a young sapling. It was only a few feet taller than I, and I would eat its luscious green leaves. That was long before there were branches with fruit on them and way before the elephant laid eyes on its towering form. I think I can say with some degree of certainty that this tree belongs to me.

Narrator 2: The partridge, who had been listening to the argument, finally jumped in.

Partridge: As it turns out, I have you all beat. You see, this tree belongs to me because I am responsible for its very existence. I'm the one who carried the seed for this tree and spit it out, right here, in this very spot. Without me, this tree would not be!

Narrator 1: They all agreed that the partridge knew the tree first, followed by the hare, then the monkey, and then the elephant. Bowing to the partridge, they acknowledge that he was their elder, deserving of respect.

Narrator 2: That dispute resolved, they vowed to live in peace and harmony with one another.

Partridge: I can gather the fruit that has fallen to the ground. I can also help spread the seeds, so other animals in the forest will have their own magnificent tree to enjoy one day.

Hare: I can gather the fruit from the lowest branches simply by reaching up.

Monkey: I can climb into the higher branches to reach those fruits. Those branches are strong and sturdy and will surely hold my weight.

Elephant: I can reach the highest branches with my trunk. I will drop the fruits to the ground so we can all gather them.

Narrator 1: The four animals began working together, using their individual strengths, so no one in the forest would go hungry.

Narrator 2: The other animals soon began to look upon the four friends as an excellent example of peaceful co-existence and co-operation. And the respect they showed to one another served as a model of harmony and goodwill throughout the forest.

Prompt: Think back to the story of Sariputta. What seem to be the lessons from this story about the four animals? [probably “respecting your elders” and “working together,” but they may have other ideas]

LESSON/STORY (cont.)

Prompt: Do you have any thoughts about which animal might represent the Buddha? [Share/Discuss]

Prompt: Many people think it might be the partridge. In India at the time, the partridge was seen as a highly intelligent bird. Also, did you notice that, even though the partridge was seen as the most senior member of the group in this story, the partridge didn't use that to belittle the other animals? Instead, the partridge used that seniority to bring everyone together. Have you ever met someone like that – someone who was an authority in some way but used that authority to bring people together? [Maybe they know a teacher, principal, or member of their extended family who is like that? Nelson Mandela (see pp. 81-82, 89) also matches that description.]

Prompt: So, if we were to order the animals according to who knew the tree the longest, in what order would they be? [Show story illustration on p. 105 = partridge, then hare, then monkey, then elephant]

Prompt: Here's the second version of the story. We'll talk about the similarities and differences afterwards. Two obvious differences are that the hare is now called a rabbit, and the bird is a pheasant instead of a partridge.

Read: Four Harmonious Friends – Version 2

[Note: Again, this is written out in Reader's Theater format. There are still six small parts, but in this version, they are Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Pheasant, Rabbit, Monkey, and Elephant.]

Narrator 1: Once, in a forest in Varanasi {vah-ruh-nah-see}, there were four animals: an elephant, a rabbit, a monkey, and a pheasant. They all fed from the same beautiful tree, but they simply could not agree on who owned it.

Pheasant: This is my tree. I am the one who planted the seed from which it grew.

Rabbit: This is my tree. I am the one who watered the seed, so the tree could survive and grow.

Monkey: This is my tree because I fertilized it. Of course, it needed water, but it would never have grown so big and strong and beautiful and full of fruit if I hadn't been around.

Elephant: I'm sure you all speak the truth, but this tree is mine because I am the one who guards it. Even if the tree had grown into a sapling with your help, it is my ability to hold the tree steady during storms and my willingness to protect it from loggers that keeps the tree standing tall.

Narrator 2: It was clear to each of them that the beautiful tree full of wonderful fruit existed, in part, because each of them had played an important role in its growth. They decided to live peacefully in the tree's shadows, helping one another to survive.

Pheasant: I do love living with all of you beneath the tree, but I get tired of eating only the fruit that falls to the ground.

Rabbit: Please, Pheasant, hop on my back. That way, you can reach a bit higher to taste the delicious fruit still hanging on the branches.

Narrator 1: This worked well for a little while until they realized they were still getting fruit only from the lowest branches.

PEACE

LESSON/STORY (cont.)

Monkey: I have an idea. Why don't the two of you hop on my back? That way, Pheasant can reach even higher, and we will all have more to eat.

Narrator 2: So the rabbit, with the pheasant on his back, jumped onto the back of the monkey.

Narrator 1: Everyone was happy but, soon, it occurred to them that the fruit at the very top of the tree was being neglected. That fruit often became scorched by the sun. When it finally fell to the ground, dried out and wrinkled, no one wanted to eat it.

Elephant: Maybe all three of you should climb onto my back. Then, we will be able to reach the fruit growing on the tallest branches. We will have more to eat, and we will also prevent waste.

Narrator 2: Together, the four harmonious friends became a towering example – literally – of how to live in unity, harmony, and friendship. Beyond that, each animal served as a model to other, similar animals in the forest. The pheasant taught those with wings, the rabbit taught those with paws, the monkey taught those with fur, and the elephant taught those with tusks. In this way, the entire forest became the most desirable place to live in that part of the world.

Prompt: What are the lessons in this version? [probably “respecting the gifts that each person brings to a situation” and “working together for the good of the group,” but they may have other ideas]

Prompt: What things are similar between the stories? [There are four animals, they live in a forest, a fruit tree is at the center of debate, the issue is resolved peacefully at the end, etc.]

Prompt: What things are different? [The animals appear in the story in reverse order. In the first story, the elephant begins the debate. In the second story, the pheasant starts things off. Also, the fundamental lesson/s may be different.]

Prompt: It's interesting that the image comes out the same in both versions of the story with the elephant on the bottom, followed by the monkey, then the hare/rabbit, and finally the bird on top. But, they end up in that order for different reasons in the two stories. In the first story, why does the bird end up on top? [Because the bird started the tree with the seed and “knew” the tree the longest. The elephant “knew” the tree most recently, so the elephant was on the bottom.]

Prompt: And in the second story, why does the bird end up on top? [So they could reach the highest branches. Obviously, the bird could not hold up the elephant.]

Prompt: There are actually several different versions of this story. How do you think that happens? Why might different versions exist? [Brainstorm/Share/Discuss. There are always different versions of a story because people come to a story with different perspectives. Also, these particular stories – the Jataka tales – were told, over and over again, through the oral tradition. Along the way, details were forgotten, added, changed, or adapted.]

Prompt: Have you ever experienced that type of thing? Perhaps you and a friend saw the same event, but you each described it in completely different ways. Or, perhaps you told someone something and when it finally got back to you, the story was almost unrecognizable. [Share]

ACTIVITY #1 – TELEPHONE GAME

Prompt: The “telephone game” usually serves as a good example of how stories can change over time. Have any of you ever played the telephone game? It’s really simple. I’m going to whisper a sentence into someone’s ear. That person is then going to whisper the exact same sentence into the next person’s ear. We’ll go around the group, and at the end, the last person will say the sentence out loud. You get to hear the sentence only once, so listen carefully.

The Facilitator should whisper a phrase into the first person’s ear. You can use any sentence, but if you want to keep it related to lesson plan, use something like, “The four animals worked together to gather fruit, so they could live harmoniously,” or “You might think the animals could never figure out a way to work together, but they did.” If you want proof of the original sentence, write it down on a piece of scrap paper and set it aside.

Go around the group, passing the sentence along by whispering it to the next person. Don’t let them hear the phrase more than once, even if they ask. Also, if your group has fewer than five people, consider going around twice.

Have the last person repeat the phrase out loud and see how it differs from the original phrase.

Prompt: Even when we used just one phrase in our little group, people heard, remembered, and repeated it differently, so it changed over time. Now imagine people sharing a story over hundreds of years and across thousands of miles. Can you see how easy it would be to end up with different versions of the same story? Do you think something like this could have happened with “The Four Harmonious Friends”? [Discuss]

CREATIVE RESPONSE: STORY *THANGKA*

Supplies

One piece of light-colored cotton fabric measuring about 8”x 14”, one wooden dowel measuring at least 12” in length and at least ¼” thick, and one story template (p. 105) per person; fabric markers; fabric glue; string/yarn/ribbon; recycled newsprint or something else to cover the work surface (especially if you use light-weight fabric)

Smartphone Time

Prompt: Today, we’ll be making a *thangka*. You probably don’t know what that means, so use your smartphones to figure out what a *thangka* is. Then, find an image of a *thangka* that you like. [*Thangka* can be spelled in various ways, including *tangka*, *thankha*, or *tanka*, so it might be interesting to see if different searches turn up different results. Let them share what they find. We’ve also provided two examples on p. 106. The top one is a *thangka* depicting the Buddhist Goddess of Compassion (Avalokitesvara). The bottom one depicts the life of the Buddha.]

Prompt: So, a *thangka* is a painting on silk or cotton fabric. The painting is usually something like a Buddhist deity, a scene from a Buddhist story, or a scene from the Buddha’s life. There are also

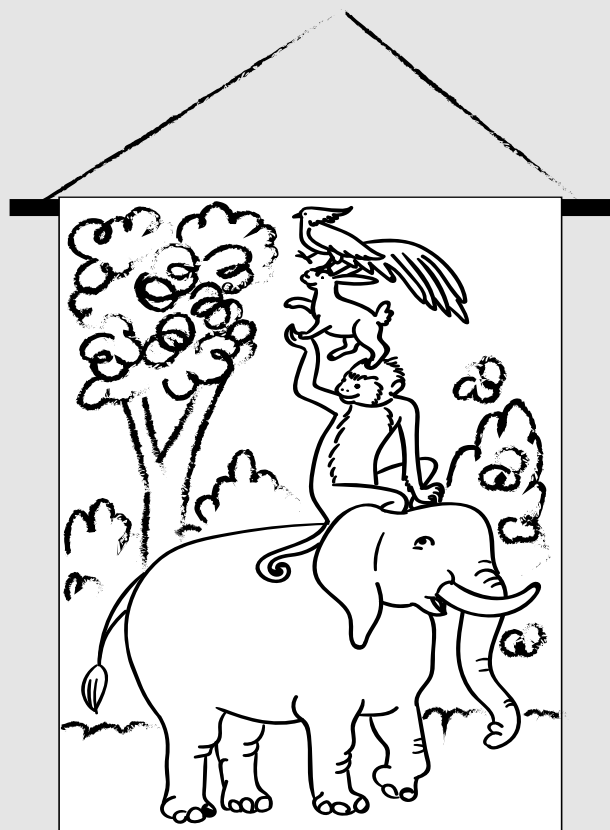
CREATIVE RESPONSE: STORY *THANGKA* (cont.)

thangkas that depict the story we read today. [Show images on p. 107. The right-hand image is simply a close-up of the animals.] We're going to make our own version of that today.

Give each person a piece of fabric and a template. Put the template under the strip of cloth, near the bottom, and trace the image on the cloth. Because the template lines are pretty thick and because the fabric is light-weight, they should be able to see the template through the fabric well enough to trace it. Be sure to leave extra fabric at the top so there's room to attach the fabric to the dowel.

Use the fabric markers to color in the image. The markers can also be used to decorate the background space with things like trees, clouds, mountains, grass, waterfalls, rainbows, etc.

Use fabric glue and roll the top part of the *thangka* over the dowel a couple of times. Then, cut a piece of yarn/ribbon/string and tie it to each end of the dowel.



ACTIVITY #2 – FOUR FRIENDS FUN

Supplies

One copy each of the animal images (p. 111). You'll need about one image per three people.

Helpful Hints

If you photocopy the images onto regular paper, they will be quite crumpled by the end of the activity. Images photocopied onto cardstock will fare better. Laminated images will fare even better.

Preparation

Cut out activity images. Laminating them in advance is optional. (Kids love using a laminator.)

Prompt: Today, we'll play a funny game using images of the animals mentioned in the story. [Show whichever images you have selected for the game.]

Prompt: Here's how the game goes.

Have everyone circle up, and explain the rules using two animals as examples. The sample rules outlined on the next page make use of the elephant and the monkey.

ACTIVITY #2 – FOUR FRIENDS FUN (cont.)

- 1) The Facilitator hands the elephant image to Person 1 and says, “This is an elephant.”
- 2) Person 1 then asks the Facilitator, “A what?”
- 3) And the Facilitator responds, “An elephant.”
- 4) Person 1 then hands the elephant image to Person 2 and says, “This is an elephant.”
- 5) Person 2 then asks Person 1, “A what?”
- 6) And Person 1 responds, “An elephant.”

Have the group practice this part as the elephant picture is passed around the circle.

Prompt: Pretty simple so far, right? But not a very fun game. Here’s the trick. We’re going to start over and do the exact same thing with the elephant picture. BUT, after a couple of people have passed the elephant picture, we’re going to start a second one – the monkey. Let’s try that and see how it goes.

When the elephant picture is passed to the third person, the Facilitator should pass the monkey picture to Person 1, using the same dialogue, so two images are being passed at the same time. In this case, the Facilitator says, “This is a monkey.” Person 1 asks, “A what?” And the Facilitator responds “A monkey.”

If you have a large group, you can start the third and fourth images (rabbit, partridge). Or, you can simply play a couple of rounds swapping out different images and presenting them in different orders.

TAKE-HOME OPPORTUNITY: PEACE FOR THE EARTH

Prompt: In today’s Jataka tale, the animals lived harmoniously around the fruit tree and brought peace to the forest. This week, see if you can do something to live harmoniously with the earth. Anyone have ideas of things you can do (or that you already do)? [Brainstorm – pick up trash in your yard, neighborhood, or school; help take care of plants; try not to waste water, food, or paper; etc.]

PREVIOUS LESSONS FROM PEACE-MAKERS SECTION

Theme: What peace means, saying peace in other languages/traditions, symbols of peace

Muhammad (Islamic): Keeping peace between his followers and the tribes of Mecca

Tribal Chiefs (Native American): Three chiefs keeping peace between their tribes

Gobind Singh (Sikh): Using his bow-and-arrow skills to keep his people from having to fight

Jesus (Christian): Bringing peace to his disciples when they were afraid in a storm

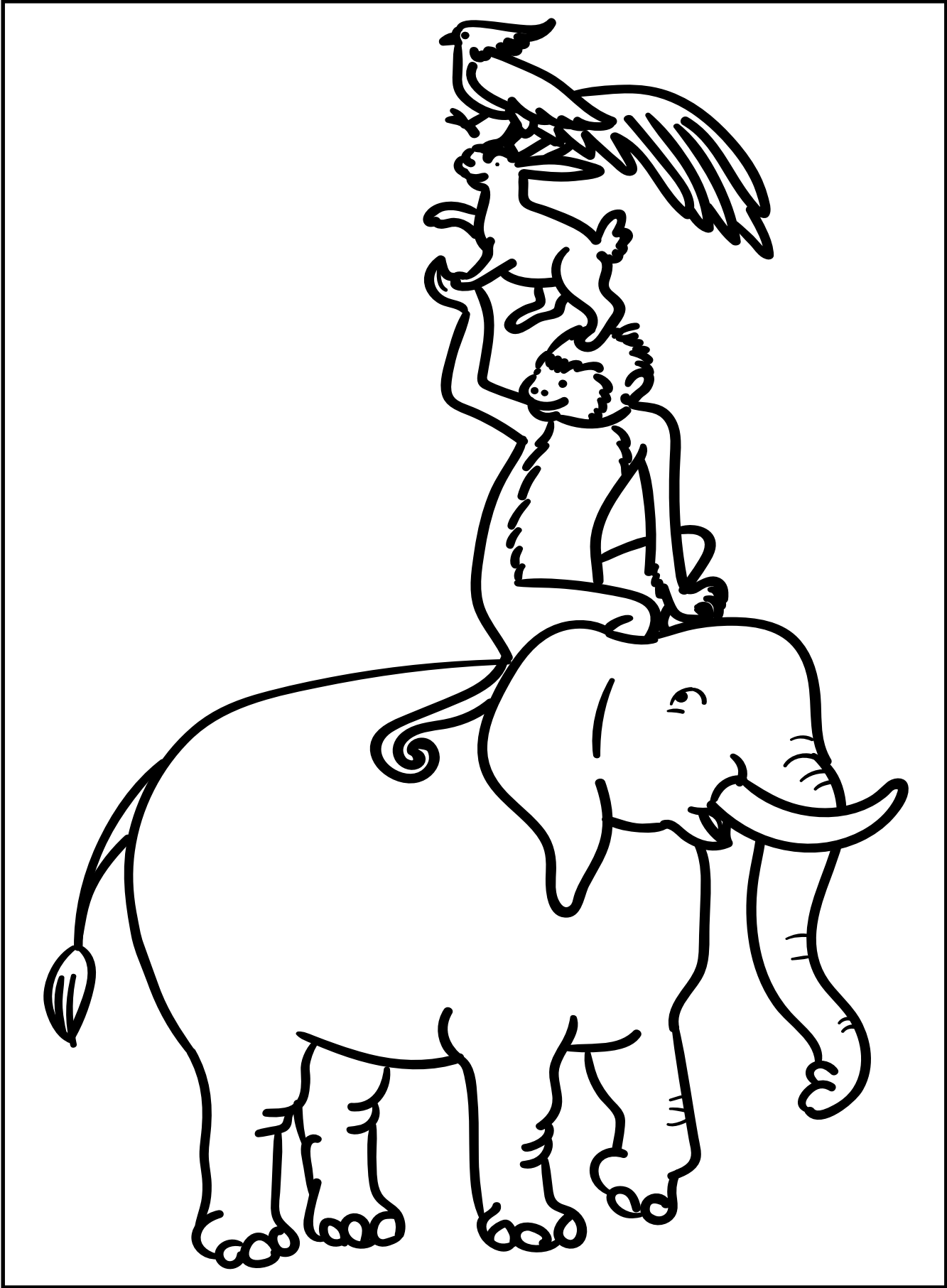
Jesus (Christian): Bringing peace to his disciples who were afraid and locked in a room



[Wikimedia Commons: Mahatma Buddha lithograph circa late 1890's (public domain)]



[Wikimedia Commons: Madonna with Beardless St. Joseph by Raphael, 1506, Hermitage Museum (public domain)]





[Wikimedia Commons: Eleven-headed, 1000-armed Avalokiteshvara (public domain)]



[Wikimedia Commons: 18th century watercolor on cloth (public domain courtesy of Brooklyn Museum)]



[Four Harmonious Friends thangka (personal photos)]

Handout of Readings

The Buddha and Sariputta

Once upon a time, there was a man named Upatissa {oo (as in “moon”-pah-ti-suh)}. He lived in India and was the oldest son in a family with many children. When Upatissa grew up, he decided to live the life of a holy man. He avoided the pleasures of the everyday world and focused his body, mind, and spirit on seeking the path to enlightenment.

Within a very short time, Upatissa learned all that his master had to teach. He began to look for another teacher, but he was having trouble finding a teacher who could answer all his questions about the deeper meaning of life.

One day, Upatissa saw a monk in the streets begging for his daily food. Upatissa was struck by the monk’s dignified and serene appearance, so he asked the monk to share some of the teachings the monk had learned from his master. Upatissa immediately recognized the teachings as the ones he had been seeking. Soon, the monk led Upatissa to his master, who happened to be the Buddha.

Upatissa learned the Buddha’s teachings thoroughly and deeply. Before long, the Buddha renamed him Sariputta {sah-ree-puh-tuh}, and he became one of the Buddha’s closest, wisest, and most important disciples.

Sariputta was also known for being extremely humble. He would sweep, straighten things up, and even pick up trash. He never used his position in the Buddha’s community, which was called a *sangha*, to avoid being helpful. Sariputta also regularly took care of the sick. He would visit them, bring them food, and find the medicines they needed. Sometimes, when he traveled with the Buddha, Sariputta would stay behind to make sure the older members of the group were taken care of.

One time, because he was assisting others, Sariputta met up with the Buddha and his other traveling companions quite late in the evening. By then, everyone had already taken the best sleeping quarters. Without giving it a second thought, Sariputta slept under a makeshift tent made of the monks’ robes. When the Buddha discovered Sariputta’s sparse sleeping conditions, the Buddha decided to share this story with his followers.

PEACE

Four Harmonious Friends – Version 1

Narrator 1: The Buddha, after seeing Sariputta sleeping under a makeshift tent, told a story about a partridge, a hare, a monkey, and an elephant. All four animals lived near a very large tree. Although they all regularly fed from the tree, they simply could not agree on who owned it.

Elephant: Clearly, my friends, this tree belongs to me because I was the one who saw it first.

Monkey: Actually, friends, this tree belongs to me. Long before the elephant first laid eyes on it, I climbed its lovely branches and ate its delicious fruit.

Hare: I'm sorry to say that both of you are mistaken. You see, I knew this tree back in the day when it was just a young sapling. It was only a few feet taller than I, and I would eat its luscious green leaves. That was long before there were branches with fruit on them and way before the elephant laid eyes on its towering form. I think I can say with some degree of certainty that this tree belongs to me.

Narrator 2: The partridge, who had been listening to the argument, finally jumped in.

Partridge: As it turns out, I have you all beat. You see, this tree belongs to me because I am responsible for its very existence. I'm the one who carried the seed for this tree and spit it out, right here, in this very spot. Without me, this tree would not be!

Narrator 1: They all agreed that the partridge knew the tree first, followed by the hare, then the monkey, and then the elephant. Bowing to the partridge, they acknowledge that he was their elder, deserving of respect.

Narrator 2: That dispute resolved, they vowed to live in peace and harmony with one another.

Partridge: I can gather the fruit that has fallen to the ground. I can also help spread the seeds, so other animals in the forest will have their own magnificent tree to enjoy one day.

Hare: I can gather the fruit from the lowest branches simply by reaching up.

Monkey: I can climb into the higher branches to reach those fruits. Those branches are strong and sturdy and will surely hold my weight.

Elephant: I can reach the highest branches with my trunk. I will drop the fruits to the ground so we can all gather them.

Narrator 1: The four animals began working together, using their individual strengths, so no one in the forest would go hungry.

Narrator 2: The other animals soon began to look upon the four friends as an excellent example of peaceful co-existence and co-operation. And the respect they showed to one another served as a model of harmony and goodwill throughout the forest.

[See story illustration.]

Four Harmonious Friends – Version 2

Narrator 1: Once, in a forest in Varanasi {vah-ruh-nah-see}, there were four animals: an elephant, a rabbit, a monkey, and a pheasant. They all fed from the same beautiful tree, but they simply could not agree on who owned it.

Pheasant: This is my tree. I am the one who planted the seed from which it grew.

Rabbit: This is my tree. I am the one who watered the seed, so the tree could survive and grow.

Monkey: This is my tree because I fertilized it. Of course, it needed water, but it would never have grown so big and strong and beautiful and full of fruit if I hadn't been around.

Elephant: I'm sure you all speak the truth, but this tree is mine because I am the one who guards it. Even if the tree had grown into a sapling with your help, it is my ability to hold the tree steady during storms and my willingness to protect it from loggers that keeps the tree standing tall.

Narrator 2: It was clear to each of them that the beautiful tree full of wonderful fruit existed, in part, because each of them had played an important role in its growth. They decided to live peacefully in the tree's shadows, helping one another to survive.

Pheasant: I do love living with all of you beneath the tree, but I get tired of eating only the fruit that falls to the ground.

Rabbit: Please, Pheasant, hop on my back. That way, you can reach a bit higher to taste the delicious fruit still hanging on the branches.

Narrator 1: This worked well for a little while until they realized they were still getting fruit only from the lowest branches.

Monkey: I have an idea. Why don't the two of you hop on my back? That way, Pheasant can reach even higher, and we will all have more to eat.

Narrator 2: So the rabbit, with the pheasant on his back, jumped onto the back of the monkey.

Narrator 1: Everyone was happy, but they soon recognized that the fruit at the very top of the tree was being neglected. That fruit often became scorched by the sun. When it finally fell to the ground, dried out and wrinkled, no one wanted to eat it.

Elephant: Maybe all three of you should climb onto my back. Then, we will be able to reach the fruit growing on the tallest branches. We will have more to eat, and we will also prevent waste.

Narrator 2: Together, the four harmonious friends became a towering example – literally – of how to live in unity, harmony, and friendship. Beyond that, each animal served as a model to other, similar animals in the forest. The pheasant taught those with wings, the rabbit taught those with paws, the monkey taught those with fur, and the elephant taught those with tusks. In this way, the entire forest became the most desirable place to live in that part of the world.



[All Photos: Wikimedia Commons, public domain,
courtesy of PD (elephant), CopyrightFreePhotos.HQ101.com (monkey),
Gorman Lewis, US Fish and Wildlife Service (rabbit), and Ulrich Prokop (pheasant)]