

Catching God's Dream of Peace

Alternative children's conversation

Biblical introduction

Jesus introduces us to God's dream of peace.

Human time is square and flat. God's time is round and forever (ie. infinite).

God's dream of peace has been caught or made visible in the web of human time.

Introducing the Dream Catcher

The Dream Catcher began with the Ojibwe tribes of the Midwest.

It is round like God's clock, a symbol of the day and year.

It is webbed in order to catch our best visions of peace and love.

It has feathers that blow, showing us that "God is on the move."

Conversation and interaction

The children's leader may opt to interact with a main dream catcher if it is accessible, or a smaller dream catcher may be made available exclusively for children's time. It could be crafted in advance or progressively crafted throughout the season.

Advent 1 Visible Time

God is moving in signs of hope.

"Look at the fig trees. As soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near." Luke 21:29-30

Materials: bendable branch or tubing, tape or wire, greenery

Conversation: The dream catcher hoop is round like a clock, or the sun and moon. A child's dream catcher is traditionally made from a willow branch which is young and bendable. This circle reminds us that childhood is a time of life when God can "shape" our lives into circles of prayer and peace. How is your life being shaped? How is your time shaped?

Application: God's clock has leaves, not numbers. (Luke 21:29-30) We shape our lives by the square calendar for school and soccer. But we also shape our lives by the round calendar of natural seasons (fig tree referent) and Christian celebrations (ie. advent and Christmas) which are ultimately in God's keeping.

Activity: Create a hoop from a flexible branch or add greenery to an existing dream catcher.

Advent 2 Creative Time

God is moving on paths of peace.

“The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion.”
Philippians 1: 6

Materials: wide, wired blue ribbon for each child

Conversation: The dream catcher webbing is meant to catch all good dreams, the best peace and love we can imagine. Native folklore describes a grandmother spider (her name is Asibikaashi) who spun a web over her baby’s bed to capture all the good dreams and let the bad dreams pass through. We know that, like the Grandmother spider, God is creating something good in our lives through Jesus. (*option: webbing the hoop as you speak*) As we grow to be like Jesus we will learn how to make good choices and become good people. (*Philippians 1:3-11*)

Application: If Jesus is like the webbing, all of our prayers must pass through him (*demonstrate with a blue ribbon*). The hopeful ones remain attached to him, the sinful ones pass through in a special prayer called “confession.”

Activity: Lead the children in a simple prayer of confession as they thread blue ribbons through the webbing. Take cues from the adult confession printed in the *Leader* material.

Advent 3 Joyful Time

God is moving to set us free.

“Rejoice in the Lord always ... and the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” from Philippians 4:4-7

Materials: pre-threaded or pre-wired beads

Conversation: Dream catchers are sometimes dyed with plum juice or “bloodroot,” natural dyes that made the leather red or purple. These are symbols of hardship or suffering. Against these sad colors, native people place bright and hopeful beads. Beads are markers of very special joy. Together, they create an art piece of “*rejoicing in the Lord always,*” living joyfully in times that are difficult.

Activity: Close your eyes and imagine dark purple. What are some hard things? or sad things? (*invite conversation on personal, local or global hardship*) Open your eyes and choose a bead. What is your brightest, happiest memory or imagining? how do you imagine these things made better? (*invite children to decorate the dream catcher web with pre-strung beads*)

Advent 4 Surprising Times

God is moving in unexpected, upside-down ways.

“The child leapt within her womb.” Luke 1: 41

Materials: pre-strung feathers

Conversation: Feathers on a dream catcher are symbols that the Spirit is moving. Some tribes believe that God’s blessing flutters down the feather and falls on the sleeping person. Other tribes believe that prayers or visions use the feather to travel up to God.

Activity: Attach feather to the dream catcher while discussing how God is moving, how God continues to do “great things.” Blow gently on the feathers as you pray a concluding prayer of gratitude.

Christmas I Growing Time

God is moving to unite our praise.

“The boy Samuel continued to grow both in size and in favor with God.” 1 Samuel 2: 19
“Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, in favor with God and people.” Luke 2:41

Materials: a small white dream catcher

Conversation: Dream catchers made for children were made with willow branches and the web was made of sinew. The sinew was wet and flexible as the dream catcher was crafted so over time it would shrink and the hoop would collapse. It’s like when you outgrow your pants! This was a sign for parents that the child was growing and ready for a new dream catcher and more grown-up prayers.

Application: By the time Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple for dedication he had “outgrown his dream catcher!” He had grown up in his mind and in his body. (Lk 2:52) White feathers from an owl are a native sign wisdom, often the wisdom of girls and women. White feather from an eagle are a native sign of courage, often the courage of boys and men. The Bible says Jesus grew up both ways! In wisdom and in courage! We are called to grow up the same way.

Activity: Complete the white dream catcher and attach to the larger purple one.

Epiphany Shining Time

God is moving as a light among nations.

“Arise! Shine! For your light has come!” Isaiah 60:1-6

Materials: white feathers

Conversation: The morning light is extremely important to the dream catcher tradition. It is the rising sun that chases all the bad images away, and rinses the joyful visions in color and warmth. A person’s dreams of peace and love are permanently attached (ie. in the form of beads) to the webbing for all the world to see.

Activity: Replace purple, advent feathers with white feathers while discussing the importance of waking up from our dreams, starting each day with the intentions of being more like Jesus.

How to make a Dream Catcher

Materials

Tubing or branch for hoop
Ribbon, string or cord
Wired or threaded beads
Feathers

- Step 1** Fashion the hoop or use a ready-made hoop. Wrap with purple cloth.
- Step 2** Web the hoop with string or cord (details found on many websites)
- Step 3** String beads as you web the hoop, or attach later with invisible string
- Step 4** Attach feathers
- Step 5** Install in worship space, against wall or suspended from ceiling

Intended use

It is possible to use a large purple (advent) dream catcher as the main visual center, provided it is lent liturgical support through adult worship. If not, it may be adequately explored through children’s worship. The small white dream catcher can be affixed right to the purple webbing (Christmas I) and the purple feathers are exchanged for white ones on Epiphany.

Alternative: In place of the six-wedge “clock” pattern described in the *Leader* resources use the dream catcher pattern and attach actual objects on a weekly basis. Use the corresponding children’s stories provided in *Leader*.

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| Advent 1 | “Sprouting time” | ... add silk ivy |
| Advent 2 | “Bath time” | ... add transparent blue ribbon (ie. water) |
| Advent 3 | “Singing time” | ... add small instruments |
| Advent 4 | “Birth time” | ... add small nursery objects |
| Christmas I | “Celebration time” | ... add small party favors |
| Epiphany | “Unwrapping time” | ... add festive bows and ribbon |