

Hymns to Sing Praise
Part 3 of a curriculum series
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God of the Sparrow

Author: Jaroslav J. Vajda
Illustrator: Preston McDaniels
Morehouse Publishing
ISBN: 9780819217455

Psalms 148, 119, & 19:14

Main Idea:

This popular contemporary hymn asks us to observe the wonders of the creation around us. Seeing all that exists—the lovely and the harsh—we have no choice but to respond to the Creator of all. How do we, as children of God, express our wonder, love, faith, and sorrow? Rather than answering those questions, this hymn simply lays out the images and asks us to consider our responses to God.

Objectives:

Through this lesson the students will have the opportunity to...

- Create stained glass windows of praise
- Learn the hymn *God of the Sparrow* and discover the many ways we offer praise to God
- Affirm who we are as children of God using questions from *Belonging to God: A First Catechism*

Something to Remember:

"Let me live that I may praise God."
Psalm 119:175

Lesson Quick View

We GATHER as the people of God

- Create tie dye art using coffee filters
- Worship together with *Belonging To God: A First Catechism (PCUSA 1983)*

We HEAR God's Word

- Read *God of the Sparrow* by Jaroslav J. Vajda
- Read together Psalm 19:14
- Review and discuss Questions 1 - 7 from *Belonging to God, A First Catechism (PCUSA)*

We RESPOND creatively

- Create a paper version of a stained glass window

We DEPART to serve

- Pray together using "Popcorn Prayers" with things to give thanks for people and things God created
- Stained glass window sharing

You Will Need

Gather

- Plastic table coverings
- White coffee filters
- Watercolor markers
- Spray bottle filled with water
- "clothes line" to use for drying filters
- Worship Center item – brightly colored cloth, candle, matches, snuffer, Bible

Hear

- Bibles
- Book - *God of the Sparrow* by Jaroslav J. Vajda
- Copy of *Belonging to God, A First Catechism (PCUSA)*
- Audio/video recording of hymn

Respond

- Pre-cut frames
- Scissors
- Glue
- Hole punch
- String for hanging

Depart

- none

Special Note to Leaders

You may find it helpful to read the book review of this book as part of your planning for this session.

Storypath: Connecting Children's Literature With Our Faith Story is part of the Union Presbyterian Seminary Library website offering resources for parents, educators, and pastors.

This book review can be found at
<http://storypath.upsem.edu/reviews/book-reviews-a-z>

Suggested Audience

- Preschool - Grade 5
- Multiage - preschool-elementary
- Intergenerational

Suggested Settings

- Mid-week gathering
- Summer Sunday School
- Family retreat/workshop
- VBS



We GATHER as the people of God

You Will Need

Nametags

Greet everyone by name as they arrive and welcome them to the session. If appropriate in your setting, give each person a name tag to encourage everyone to learn each other's names. Introduce newcomers to the rest of the group and invite everyone to make them feel welcome.

You Will Need

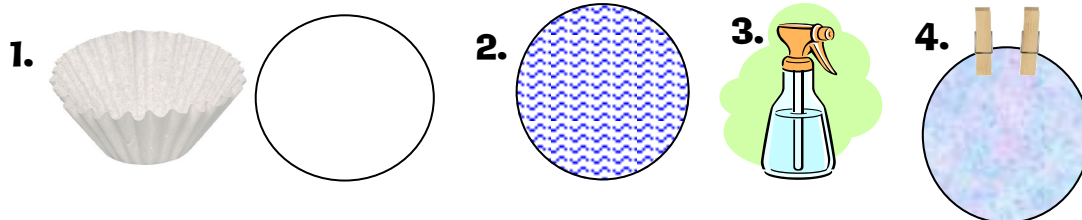
- Newspaper/plastic table coverings
- White coffee filters
- Watercolor markers
- Spray bottle filled with water
- "clothes line" or drying rack

Coffee Filter Tie Dye Art

Before the session begins, cover all work areas with plastic tablecloths and/or newspaper and set up a "clothes line" or "drying rack." Set all supplies and have helpers ready. You may want to practice with a few designs/colors/etc. and have them as examples.

As children arrive, invite them to create their own tie dye art by following the steps below:

1. Smooth out a white coffee filter to form a flat circle.
2. Draw designs/squiggles/simple shapes using watercolor markers.
3. Hold coffee filter at an arms length away and spray LIGHTLY with water to make colors run together into a "tie-dyed" effect. NOTE: This step works best when two people work together! Keep spray bottle set to "fine spray" to keep colors from running too much. Short sprays are better at allowing the colors to blend slowly.
4. Hang to dry. These will be used later to create stained glass windows in the Respond time.



You Will Need

- Worship Center:
- Brightly colored cloth
 - Christ candle
 - Matches & Snuffer
 - Posters of Q & A #1-7 from *Belonging to God: A First Catechism*

Before the Session

Set up the worship center in a location where everyone can make a circle around it. A small table or piano bench works great.

Opening Worship

When most or all of the children have arrived and everyone has had an opportunity to create a tie-dye art piece, gather everyone together around the worship center you have created .

Invite everyone to join you in worship as you **light the Christ candle** saying, "Jesus says, 'I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

The hymn we are learning today was written to answer the question of how and why God's creatures and children are to serve God. To fully appreciate this purpose, we must first affirm who we are as children of God. **Read together the first 7 Questions and Answers from *Belonging to God: A First Catechism using posters you created before the session.***

Invite the group to join you as you pray the following prayer or one of your choosing:

Dear God of heaven and earth, We stand in awe of your marvelous creation and lift our praise in gratitude. Thank you just doesn't seem enough. Accept now our voices of praise and thanksgiving. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Close your opening worship time by extinguishing the Christ candle as you say, "The Light that was in one place, is now in every place."

Questions & Answers from *Belonging to God: A First Catechism (PCUSA 1983)*

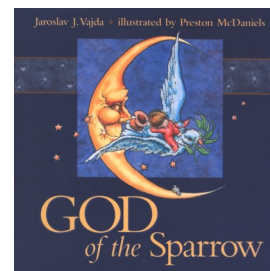
<p>Question 1. Who are you? Answer 1. I am a child of God.</p>	<p>Question 2. What does it mean to be a child of God? Answer 2. That I belong to God, who loves me.</p>	<p>Question 3. What makes you a child of God? Answer 3. Grace-God's free gift of love that I do not deserve and cannot earn.</p>	<p>Question 4. Don't you have to be good for God to love you? Answer 4. No. God loves me in spite of all I do wrong.</p>	<p>Question 5. How do you thank God for this gift of love? Answer 5. I promise to love and trust God with all my heart.</p>	<p>Question 6. How do you love God? Answer 6. By worshipping God, by loving others, and by respecting what God has created.</p>	<p>Question 7. What did God create? Answer 7. God created all that is, seen and unseen.</p>
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We HEAR God's Word

God of the Sparrow

Read the book *God of the Sparrow* by Jaroslav J. Vajda pausing to note the items that are named, the responses offered, and the contemporary illustrations of Preston McDaniels. You may want to create a chart with two columns as you read along (one column for items God created and one column for responses). Share some of what you have learned about the history of the hymn and the motivation of the author.



You Will Need

- A copy of the book *God of the Sparrow* by Jaroslav J. Vajda
- Background on the hymn from [GBOD.org/History of Hymns](http://GBOD.org/HistoryofHymns)
- Audio/video recording of the hymn
- Bible

God of the Sparrow

1. God of the **sparrow**, God of the **whale**, God of the **swirling stars**
How does the creature say **Awe**? How does the creature say **Praise**?
2. God of the **earthquake**, God of the **storm**, God of the **trumpet blast**.
How does the creature cry **Woe**? How does the creature cry **Save**?
3. God of the **rainbow**, God of the **cross**, God of the **empty grave**.
How does the creature say **Grace**? How does the creature say **Thanks**?
4. God of the **hungry**, God of the **sick**, God of the **prodigal**.
How does the creature say **Care**? How does the creature say **Life**?
5. God of the **neighbor**, God of the **foe**, God of the **pruning hook**.
How does the creature say **Love**? How does the creature say **Peace**?
6. God of the **the ages**, God **near at hand**, God of the **loving heart**.
How do your children say **Joy**? How do your children say **Home**?

Sing Together

Play an audio/video version of the hymn (such as the one found on YouTube performed by "The River's Voice: Trish & Richard Bruxvoort Colligan 1997.")

Invite the children to sing along.

Scripture Reading

Read Psalm 19:14. How do these words speak to the hymn?

Discussing the Hymn

Lead the children in a discussion about the hymn using some of the questions below or ones you have created yourself:

- How do you say thank you to God for the world, your family, your friends, everything you are?
- What does it mean to live with an attitude of gratitude?
- How can you show others how you are thankful to God?
- What other words of response could be added to this hymn?



We RESPOND creatively

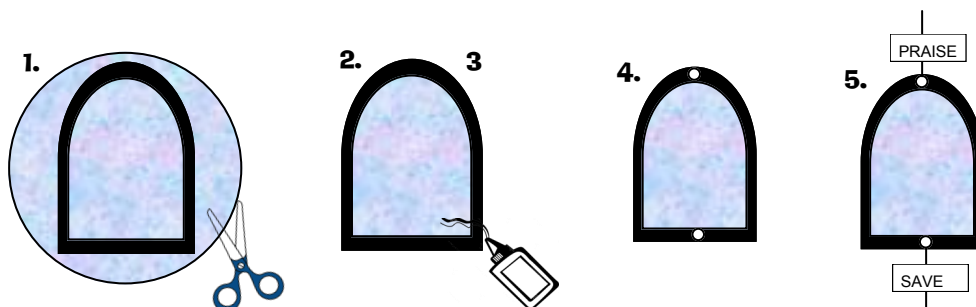
You Will Need

- Completed tie dye coffee filter art
- Pre-cut construction paper frames
- Scissors
- Glue
- Hole punch
- String
- Paper strips with words of praise on them

Stained Glass Windows

For many centuries, stained glass windows were created to reflect God's beauty in creation and offer praise to God. Invite the children to create their own stained glass window using the tie dye coffee filter art created in the Gather time.

1. Glue a pre-cut window frame to one side of the coffee filter.
2. Trim away excess coffee filter.
3. Turn over and glue second frame to the opposite side of the coffee filter.
4. Optional: Punch a hole in the top and bottom of each frame and add string for hanging.
5. Optional: Attach paper strips with words of praise written on them to the strings.





We DEPART to serve

Closing Prayer

Gather the children into a circle for a time of closing prayer using a "Popcorn Prayer" style. Allow the children to speak words from the hymn or identify things from their own experience that they would like to give thanks and praise for. As each thing/person is named, lead the group in a response of "Thank you God."

Sing Together *God of the Sparrow*

Play the hymn one more time and sing the words together. Add motions and movement as the Spirit allows.

You Will Need

- Audio recording of the hymn
- Completed stained glass windows

Benediction

Invite the children to hang their stained glass window creations in a place where others can see them and offer their own words of praise as silent or spoken prayers.

OR - invite the children to continue adding words to their stained glass windows to create a bigger mobile.

Expanding the Lesson

Looking for ways to turn this one-hour session into a mini retreat or expanded session?

Here are some enrichment activities for you to consider as you plan for your unique time frame and group dynamics.

Gather

•Melted Crayon Stained Glass

Things you will Need

Old crayons with paper removed, Dull scissors, Wax paper, Iron, Pre-cut paper frames, Glue

Instructions

- 1.Create crayon shavings by scraping old crayons with a pair of dull scissors
- 2.Arrange the shavings between two pieces of wax paper and iron until the shavings are melted.
- 3.Glue pre-cut window frames to each side of the wax paper, trim to fit and hang in window.

•Tissue Paper Stained Glass

Things you will need

Small squares of colored tissue paper, Construction paper, Spray bottle filled with white vinegar, Pre-cut paper frames, Glue

Instructions

- 1.Lay tissue squares on construction paper in a random pattern
- 2.Spray entire area with a light coat of vinegar (which will make the colors run.)
- 3.Remove tissue squares and let dry
- 4.Glue pre-cut window frame to paper and trim paper to fit the frame

Hear

•**Enlarge pages of book** to create an "I Spy" puzzle filled with clues to the many things God has created. Study the pages together to see how many items you can find from the words of the hymn.

•**Create a WORDLE (or word cloud) using all the words mentioned in the book.**

Wordle.net is an online site that allows you to create "word clouds" using your own text. Word size is determined by the frequency of the words in the text. Fonts and colors can be mixed to create different effects. Try cutting and pasting the words from this hymn into a **Wordle** on the site OR create your own word cloud using a variety of color markers and words written in different shapes and sizes.

Respond

•**Create a cheer or rap** such as
 "I'm a child of God I'm told
 God loves all, both young and old
 Now I've got some attitude
 Praising God with gratitude
 Praise God....say Awe...
 Praise God...say Thanks...

•**Practice living with an attitude of gratitude by incorporating a service project** that ties with a mission of your church or uses one of the following:

Creating cheer cards for seniors
 Collecting food and creating food baskets for the hungry
 Assembling toiletry kits for the homeless or an abuse shelter
 Creating cheer kits for children in shelters