



An art gallery in the Sunday School

Colleen Moore | June 17, 2013

A few months ago I read a beautiful book about Rembrandt's painting of "The Return of The Prodigal Son." I was so inspired by the parenting lessons highlighted in this painting that I purchased my own art poster, and then I realized that I wanted to share it with my branch church. I thought it would be fun to turn it into a contest so that everyone could guess the name of the Bible story. I put the poster of the painting in a plastic frame on a Sunday School table. Next to the poster I placed index cards so that students and adults could write down the name of the Bible story (and their own name), and then each index card was placed in an envelope. New clues were given each week to help the individuals who did not recognize the name of the painting.

None of the children recognized Rembrandt's "Prodigal Son" at first, so we began with this clue: "The book reviewer for *The Christian Science Sentinel* said he learned more about parenting from reading a book about this painting than in all of his years of raising his own children." The next week's clue was: "This painting focuses on one of Jesus' parables although other parables are also included." By this time, everyone in the Sunday School had correctly identified this painting, so we were able to discuss how we should be like the father in the Prodigal Son as well as discussing some of the symbolism used by Rembrandt, such as how he depicted God as Father and Mother.



Photo by Taryn McNichols/(c) TFCCS

Since we showcased Rembrandt's "Prodigal Son," we have displayed other famous works of art from time-to-time in our Sunday School. If you are interested in doing this, here are a few tips: Inexpensive plastic frames and frame stands are available from discount and hobby stores, and it is a good idea to choose some standard frame sizes before ordering your art posters. These posters may be obtained online very inexpensively. (For example, a 24 x 36 inch "Return of the Prodigal Son" is available for \$4.95 from www.allposters.com). If a painting is too familiar, then we ask harder questions. For example, in the spring we displayed a poster of "The Last Supper" by Leonardo DaVinci. The questions for this poster asked people to identify each person in the painting in order, list the items on the supper table that do not appear in the Bible story, and so on.

We are currently displaying a poster made from greeting cards of The Mother Church's stained glass windows. Excellent background material about these windows and photos of windows unavailable as cards can be found in the paperback edition of *Building of The Mother Church* by Joseph Armstrong and Margaret Williamson. (The greeting cards and book are available through the Reading Room.) For example, it was fun for everyone to find the symbols in the stained glass "The Window of the Open Book" after reading about Mary Baker Eddy's description of New Jerusalem in *Science and Health* (see p. 575).

Eddy wrote, "Spiritual teaching must always be by symbols." (*Science and Health*, p. 575). These art posters are one way to bring church-goers and students together in our Sunday School after the service. We can all enjoy these masterpieces together, and it has literally given us all a new way of approaching and interpreting some familiar Bible stories.

1. Lynn - 6/17/2013

Great idea! We do have at least one print up in our Sunday School...Daniel in the Lion's Den by Briton Riviere.

2. Colleen Moore - 6/17/2013

I used Briton Riviere's "Daniel in the Lions Den" and his "Daniel's Answer to the King" in Sunday School last week since Daniel's story was in the lesson. I also used the artist's name in a search on jsh-online and found some great testimonies about these paintings, including one of a Kenyan baby who was left alone in the jungle and recovered without harm. A google search also pulled up some archival information about how both of these paintings were displayed in Mrs. Eddy's homes at this link:

<http://www.marybakereddylibrary.org/collections/research/objects/item/daniel>

I didn't have the opportunity to order posters for this lesson and relied on google images, so that is an option if you start thinking about your Sunday School lesson the night before!

3. Peggy in Florida - 6/19/2013

Lovely! I appreciate the vividness of Vincent Van Gogh's "Good Samaritan", too!

4. **grace** - 6/19/2013

Mrs. Eddy's statement: "Spiritual teaching must always be by symbols" is a powerful go ahead for Sunday School teachers to use "props" in Sunday School. One of the most successful sessions I ever taught was a treasure hunt which bounced the students from the Concordance to the Dictionary to Wikipedia to a biography of Mrs. Eddy, to the Bible, to Misc. Writings and finally, to Science and Health. Teaching need not be dull. Christ Jesus was never dull! And he used parables (symbols) often to make a point. Kudos to you and your Sunday School, Colleen. Inspiration ever fresh from divine Love!

5. **Courtenay Rule** - 6/19/2013

Lovely, Colleen, and thanks to the others who've shared ideas too! I'm just remembering how there was a beautiful Sentinel article just this past Easter, called "365 Days of Easter", by Robin Hoagland (<http://sentinel.christianscience.com/shared/view/ec6h1s6hy0?s=cs>). She starts by focussing on a famous painting by Eugene Bernand of Peter and John running to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection, and some lessons we can draw from it. At least two Reading Rooms I know of made a window display with a copy of that article and a print of that painting! It would be another lovely one to share with Sunday School students (and perhaps see again if they can guess the story correctly!). I know it's featured in one or two other articles in our periodicals at times, so it's worth looking for.

Thanks again all!

6. **VIRGINIA** - 6/20/2013

how about the picture of: see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil?
any comments about that picture! Don't know who did it, but i've seen that one around before using a monkey for description.

7. **Colleen Moore** - 6/20/2013

I love jsh-online for answering questions such as Virginia's. I typed in "monkey see no evil" and was directed to several articles about these carved figures of monkeys -- one with his eyes covered, the second with his hands over his mouth, and the third stopping his ears. "Don't just mute, refute!", a January 17, 2011 Sentinel article by John Kohler, quotes a reminiscence by John Lathrop, an early worker, since someone had sent Mrs. Eddy a set of these three little monkeys made out of brass. "That, said Mrs. Eddy in substance, is not Christian Science, it is heathen philosophy. Christian Scientists do not close their eyes to evil, but open them." (We Knew Mary Baker Eddy, p.117) So, the three little monkeys would be another great teaching symbol -- but of what not to do!

8. **Julie in Queensland, Australia** - 6/21/2013

Colleen this is great! What a wonderful idea. And I love the quote about teaching by symbols. Virginia, it's interesting to read We Knew Mary Baker Eddy Volume 1 (amplified edition) p. 260 where John Lathrop describes Mrs. Eddy's response to receiving a gift of a set of the three little brass monkeys - "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil."
"That, said Mrs. Eddy in substance, is not Christian Science; it is heathen philosophy. Christian Scientists do not close their eyes to evil, but open them. They open their eyes, spiritual discernment, and awaken to the true nature of evil or sin, to its false claims, methods, subtlety, etc., and then realize its nothingness, its utter powerlessness to control or to harm them."
That might be a powerful lesson for Sunday school students.

9. **Nancy** - 6/21/2013

MBE was once given a little sculpture of the "three monkeys" (see/hear/speak no evil) and as I recall, she felt that it did not represent how we should address evil in C.S. The MBE Library could probably give you more information about this, Virginia.

10. **Sharon Morash** - 6/21/2013

What wonderful, creative ideas for incorporating beauty and inspiration with familiar Bible stories and parables! This is exactly why I love this weekly feature. Thanks to all for sharing.

11. **Gloria Mullins** - 6/21/2013

In our Sunday School, we have a carved set of Noah's boat, Noah & Mrs. Noah, and many animals. Then we had a contest--what does Ark mean to you? and look up Ark in S&H. Two boys won and they got to choose what additional animals they wanted to add to the collection. They chose 2 black labs and 2 anteaters. These are all hand carved by a man and wife in Mendocino, CA. We will continue our questions and more lucky animals will be added to the ark. In addition, we took our Sunday School to a farm nearby and they got to see real Nubian goats and kids, doves, ride horses, etc. so it made everything a little more real and most of all--fun!

12. **Marilyn** - 6/21/2013

When I was a child we had a small set of the three monkeys representing see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. I was surprised to learn that Mrs. Eddy said emphatically that was not Christian Science. As I grew in understanding, I saw why she would have said that. She spent a great deal of time and effort to get students to face the belief of evil and see it as powerless and unreal -- which is not what the monkeys are doing. They are trying to avoid the issue by hiding from it as the first is covering his eyes with his hands, the second is covering his ears, and the third is covering his mouth.

13. **Pauline A, Curtis** - 6/22/2013

Great ideas! Could also be applied to reading room windows.

14. **June Harrison** - 7/16/2013

Comment #6 refers to the well-known monkeys who represent "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil." However, in one of the authorized biographies, our Leader Mrs. Eddy told her student that that was NOT Christian Science. Jesus rebuked evil and cast it out. Christian Scientists do not cover their eyes to the claims of evil; they rebuke it and cast it out. In that manner, true Christianity blesses mankind.

15. **Colleen Moore** - 1/26/2014

Another art poster we have used is "Raising of Lazarus" by Van Gogh which was inspired by an earlier "Raising of Lazarus" painting by Rembrandt. You should contrast the two paintings because it highlights the depiction of the ever-present and non-fleshy Christ in the Van Gogh painting.

16. **Peter Daniel** - 1/30/2014

Colleen, thank you for sharing these ideas. So sorry I came across this blog so late in the day. I am so interested in pursuing these ideas further as you would expect from a Christian Scientist who was a teacher of Art and Design for over 30 years. As a first reader I had to select hymns and sometimes solos and I often thought I could easily find a painting which would connect with the Bible Lesson for that week. I toyed with the idea of placing a picture of the week in the church entrance hall. Never did that but I think it would be fun. Pictorial representation can often be difficult for Christian Science folk. That's my experience. I would love to explore why that is. Hope this message finds its way to you. Would love to discuss ideas further. Maybe you could contact me through my website so you can check me out first. Thanks again.
peterdaniel.org.uk

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