

The Selfish Giant

By Oscar Wilde

Illustrated by S. Saelig Gallagher

Background: “When the Selfish Giant builds a high wall around his lovely garden to keep the children out, the North Wind blows, the Frost comes and the Snow dances through the trees. The Giant wonders why Spring never comes to his cold, white garden. Then one day the Giant looks out to see a most wonderful sight... spring has returned thanks to an unusual child. As the Giant begins to welcome the children back, opening his heart to their presence, he is eventually rewarded by this tiny Christ-like child.”

Note: There are several illustrated versions of this story. My favorite is the one pictured here with illustrations by Susan Saelig Gallagher. The children are depicted as a diverse bunch which matches the diverse faces that I see on Sundays. The versions illustrated by Ritva Voutila and Lisbeth Zwerger are also beautiful but more traditional.

Sunday Morning:

Warm welcome! Have a simple craft which requires little or no explanation – beading, coloring, stamping, etc. -- to keep hands busy while you wait for everyone to arrive. About 10 minutes into the session, gather the children around you. You can sit on the floor or a slightly higher spot; the kids can sit on the floor or benches.

Ice-breaker (option): Say your name and something you will bring to church (the item must have the same first letter as your name). For instance, “My name is Riley, I’m going to church and I’m going to bring roses.” The next person has to say their own and then remember the names and the items of everyone who preceded them. How many people can remember everyone *and* what they’re going to bring?

Introduce the Book:

Show the cover and share the title with the children and then ask:

- What does it mean to be selfish?
- Describe a time when you observed selfish behavior...

Read the Book: Read the book “librarian style,” with the pictures out to the children. Make sure every child has had a chance to look at the pictures before turning the page.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why the Giant didn’t like children?
- Why was it winter in the garden? How did that change?
- I wonder who the little boy was?
- Can children teach adults? Can you think of a time when you taught an adult something?

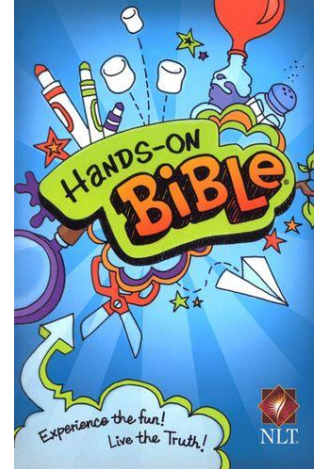
Hands-On Bible:

How does Jesus feel about children? Can you think of any stories or songs that tell about Jesus with the children?

Let's check in the Bible to see what's there...

Pass out Bibles. You say something to the effect of:

- We are going to find a passage of the Bible – but how do we do that?! [Go to the Table of Contents.]
- The Bible is divided into two big sections, do you know what those are? [Old Testament/New Testament.] The Old Testament is the old stories - before Jesus' life. The New Testament is the story of Jesus' life and teachings.
- There were four people who told the story of Jesus' life in the New Testament and they are: Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.
- Let's find the Book of Matthew – what page does that book start on? [p. 939 – wait for everyone to get there before moving on.]
- Now find Chapter 18 – see the big numbers in blue at the top of the page?
- The tiny numbers in the text tell you the verse and we are looking for verse 1...
- Will someone read that paragraph aloud [or you can]? (stop after verse 4)



Matthew 18:1-4

The Greatest in the Kingdom

About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”

Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. The he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Bible Follow-Up:

- What does Jesus mean when he says that adults must become like little children in order to go to heaven?
- Is there something about being a child that brings you closer to God?

Snack: Juice and munchies. Imperative ;-D

Craft:

There are several options for making paper flowers to create a “garden of children” on your bulletin board or on the classroom wall/windows/door. Use blue painters’ tape to adhere for easy and damage-free removal at the end of the season.

If you have time, you could take the kids’ individual pictures and then (later?) add their faces to the center of the flowers they’ve made.

The kids could also make tissue paper flowers – those are a fun and challenging step by step project. See the video here (3:27) for instructions so you can learn and then walk the kids through it on Sunday: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzgF7edQo8k>

“The children are the most beautiful flowers of all.” – The Selfish Giant

