**Modified Version of Ruhi G3 Lesson 6 on Zoroaster**

*This lesson is long, and you may have to pick and choose which to include, or make two lessons out of it. The story can be divided into two lessons as well.*

**Opening Prayers- Prayer Sharers**

**Review quotes-** anyone who has memorized can share

(Including **“The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book, nay, of every divinely revealed verse, is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding, so that peace and tranquility may be firmly established amongst them.”)**

**Review prayer** that they have been learning.

**“Glory be to Thee, O Lord my God! Make manifest the rivers of Thy sovereign might, that the waters of Thy Unity may flow through the inmost realities of all things, in such wise that the banner of Thine unfailing guidance may be raised aloft in the kingdom of Thy command and the stars of Thy divine splendor may shine brightly in the heaven of Thy majesty.**

**Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou, verily, art the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.”** –Baha’u’llah

See movements at [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under lesson 4

**Intro to Lesson:**

*This lesson will focus on the importance that all Manifestations of God have placed on developing an upright character and carrying out pure and goodly deeds. In this connection, the children will learn about the life of Zoroaster, Whose teachings spread among the people of Persia, refining human character and transforming society. It is suggested that you draw on the ideas in the paragraphs below in introducing the lesson to the children.*

**I will be asking you some questions based on what I am about to share with you, so please pay close attention.**

All the Manifestations of God speak of the importance of goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. Their teachings raise the standard of human conduct and transform both the inner life of the individual and the outward life of groups and nations. They call on people to choose that which is good and to act accordingly. Goodly deeds, reinforced by a saintly character, exert great power and can change this world into a heavenly paradise. In order for anything to be accomplished in this world, power is needed. Think of a large rock. To carry it from one place to another, a person must spend a certain amount of energy, exerting the power needed to move the rock. But the changes that must be brought about in this world are not only physical ones; we must advance in knowledge and understanding, in love and justice, and so we must draw on other kinds of powers that do not originate in the material world. We must become spiritually empowered.

Zoroaster was a Manifestation of God Who brought a new set of Divine teachings, some three thousand years ago, to a land divided by war and plagued with suffering, where the standards of noble and upright conduct had been lost. He called on the people to possess good thoughts, speak good words and carry out good deeds, refining human character and bringing peace and prosperity to the land. Individuals and society, both, were transformed.

**Questions:**

* **What kind of conduct do the Manifestations of God call on people to choose?** (They call on people to choose that which is good and to act accordingly)
* **Through what power can this world be changed into a heavenly paradise?** (Through the power of goodly deeds, reinforced by a saintly character)
* **Can you give some examples of good deeds? What are some of the signs of a saintly character?**
* **If we do not choose to use the power of goodly deeds, reinforced by a saintly character, can we bring about all the changes we need to build God’s Kingdom on earth?** (no)
* **Who was Zoroaster?** (Zoroaster was a Manifestation of God Who brought a new set of Divine teachings many thousands of years ago.)
* **What was the effect of Zoroaster’s teaching about the importance of good thoughts, good words and good deeds?** (His teachings refined human character and brought peace and prosperity to the land of Persia. Individuals and society were both transformed.)

(Can have the quote on the wall- “The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct” and share how all the Messengers of God have said this same concept as it is an eternal truth)

**Memorization:**

(see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson for movements to the quote)

*In the quotation below, which the children will memorize today, Baha’u’llah tells us that the light of a good character is more powerful than the light of the sun*

**“A good character is, verily, the best mantle for men from God. With it He adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By My life! The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof.”**

**Here are some words that you may need to form concrete examples of for the children to understand:**

**Mantle**- a shawl or covering

**Adorneth**- to make something more beautiful

**Temples of His loved ones-** our bodies are like temples. Temples are used to worship God and our body houses our spirit while on this earth. Our spirit is holy because it comes from God and reflects His light.

**So what does God want us to adorn ourselves with? The mantle of a good character.**

**Surpasseth**- is greater than

**Radiance**- brilliance, brightness

**What do you know about the sun? It gives life and light to everything, right? What does Baha’u’llah say is even brighter than the light of the sun and its radiance? The light of a good character. So how important is it that we make efforts to refine our character and make it better and better? How can a good character shed light in the world?**

**Songs:** (see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) for lyrics and some music)

* **“The light of a good character”** (see video on [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson)
* **The betterment of the world song** by Mana
* **Beauty is What You Do** by Full Circle Learning
* **Any requests from Songbook**

**Cooperative Games:**

**1. Hula Hoop Pass**

Have the group form a circle holding hands. Ask two people to let go of their grip long enough for them to place their hands through a hula hoop before rejoining them.

The team task is to pass the hula hoop around the circle in a specified direction until it returns to the starting point.

\*\*Another way to play is two use two hoops and have them go around the circle in opposite directions.\*\* (GOOD FOR OUR SIZE GROUP)

**2. Silly Willy**

1. Two lines stand facing each other and become teams.

2. One player from each team, at opposite end of the line, start by bowing to each other and calling out “Silly Willy”

3. The two players then walk toward and past each other without laughter or smiling, while the teams attempt to make the passer by from the opposite team burst into laughter. (specify before hand that it all needs to be clean and appropriate)

4. If a player should crack a smile, they join the line of their opponents.

5. The game ends when there is only one team left, or everyone is too laughed out to continue!

**Story**

*The historical account today focuses on the life of Zoroaster. As you relate the events associated with His life to the children, you will want to emphasize how His teachings served to transform the character of the people and delivered a divided land from the darkness of war and suffering. In this connection, you should note, especially in Zoroaster’s encounter with the king, that the concept of freewill is central to this narrative, and the children should gain at least some degree of understanding that* ***God gives every individual the choice between good and bad****.*

**Props (optional):**

(see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson for images that correlate with the highlighted words below)

Zoroaster was born some three thousand years ago in the northwestern part of the land of Persia (can show map). At that time the people of Persia, like the people among whom Abraham and Krishna appeared, worshipped elements of nature, such as the earth, the sun, and fire. You remember that, so many thousands of years ago, humanity was still learning about the oneness of God and people sometimes lived in such awe of the powers of nature that they took the sun, the moon, and the stars, for example, as their gods. They prayed to them and tried to please them, hoping to win their favor and receive their protection. In those times, the people of Persia lived in settlements, each with its own king. These small kingdoms were constantly at war with one another, and bands of raiders roamed the land, attacking homes, killing families and stealing whatever they could. Violence was everywhere.

Zoroaster’s family was part of a group of farmers that lived close to a river in the small kingdom of Medea. They cared for cattle and horses and cultivated crops. His father was of noble lineage, and it is said that His mother was visited by angels while she was carrying Him. According to tradition, when Zoroaster was born, a new star appeared in the sky, and all the surroundings were illuminated, as if encircled in a ring of fire. The world of creation seemed to be filled with happiness, and the Newborn is said to have laughed.

Not much is known about Zoroaster’s early life, but is it thought that He trained to be a priest from a young age. Priests, in those days, made offerings to the many gods that the people imagined were in control of the universe. They carried out rites and rituals that everyone believed were required to make these false gods happy. But, by the time Zoroaster was about twelve years of age, He started to question openly the beliefs of the people around Him, participating in discussions with elders during which He demonstrated extraordinary wisdom and understanding. It seems, already as a young person, He had begun to commune with God, and His heart and mind were filled with Divine attributes, such as knowledge and power, truth and light.

Zoroaster probably completed His training around the age of fifteen or so, when He went out in search of the truth. A wanderer, He witnessed the violence of warring kingdoms and the injustices suffered by peaceful communities. He longed to establish justice, order, and tranquility and to help the people live good lives. At the age of twenty, Zoroaster was guided by God to a quiet, secluded place in the mountains, where He prayed and meditated, devoting Himself to spiritual purification.

According to tradition, Zoroaster was thirty years of age when He received God’s Revelation. On the banks of the River Avetak, He had a vision of a great shining being, the archangel of good thought, who led His soul into the presence of five other archangels and then to the presence of God. The teachings He was called upon to spread among the people were revealed to Him, and He saw clearly how the future would be brightened (picture of the dawn of a new day) by the new faith He would establish. On six further occasions, it is said, He had visions in which the fullness of His Mission was made known to Him.

Zoroaster then set out to teach His Message. In one hand He held a burning torch which symbolized the light of God, and in the other He held a staff made from the wood of a cypress tree, which symbolized the holiness of God and the strength and prosperity that His teachings would bestow. He taught that every individual is a creation of one God and that every human being should therefore be treated with care and kindness. He explained that all must choose between good and evil. To choose that which is good meant three things: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Upright character and praiseworthy actions, like rays of light that chase away darkness, would overcome evil and make peace and prosperity possible.

Zoroaster taught God’s Message with fervor and zeal, but no one would listen. He was rejected and ridiculed. Priests and kings, common people and members of His own family- all refused to heed His Words. Finally, after ten years, Zoroaster’s cousin accepted the truth of His Message. He became the first follower of the new faith and accompanied Zoroaster during His travels, helping Him to proclaim the teachings of God.

Zoroaster then visited the court of one of the Persian kings, Vishtaspa, who, though a good man, had allowed the priests in his realm to become very powerful. They were angry to think the king would take even a moment to listen to Zoroaster. Of course, they were really worried that, if the king accepted the truth of Zoroaster’s Message, there would be no need for their rites and rituals and they would lose their power. The story is told that Zoroaster entered the royal court with dignity, wearing a shining white robe and carrying a bowl of flames as a symbol of God’s warm and purifying love. The king was seated on the throne, with his wife the queen and the princes of the realm beside him. Guards, priests, and other subjects filled the court. Zoroaster told Vishtaspa to use his own ears, his own eyes, and his own mind to understand that God had given everyone the capacity to know right from wrong and to choose to do good. By following God’s teachings, He explained, Vishtaspa could bring prosperity to his kingdom.

Having delivered His Message to the king, Zoroaster was then questioned by the wise men and priests of the court. Thirty-three questions were put to Him, and each He answered with great eloquence. It is said that everything in the court was affected by Zoroaster’s words, galvanized by the love of God. The walls seemed to vibrate, the animals moved about happily, and even the dance of the flames in the fireplaces seemed livelier than ever before. The hearts of the people were also touched, filled with love and joy. Vishtaspa, too, was deeply affected by Zoroaster’s words and asked Him to return the next day, and again the next. Zoroaster continued to demonstrate His knowledge and wisdom, and the priests grew more and more jealous. So they plotted against Him. They went to His room and filled it with bones, nails, hair, heads and tails of cats and dogs- the things of witchcraft. When Vishtaspa heard what had been found, he accused Zoroaster of being a sorcerer and, at the prompting of his priests, commanded that He be locked in an underground dungeon and left there to starve. The plottings of the priests seemed to have succeeded.

For two years Zoroaster remained in the dark prison, until one day He was summoned to the king. Vishtaspa’s most precious horse, a symbol of his majesty and prosperity, had grown sick. Each of its legs has somehow been contracted; it could not move. Zoroaster told the king that He could cure the horse, and one by one the legs were fixed. With this, He called upon the king to recognize the power of the one true God and to defend His faith. The king’s heart was uplifted, and at that moment he had a vision that he was in the presence of God’s archangels, surrounded by light. He felt the power of the Almighty and left his throne to kneel at Zoroaster’s feet, dedicating himself to the service of God. You realize, of course, that the whole of the land was, in reality, afflicted with suffering, and Vishtaspa had seen that only the teachings of God could alleviate its ills.

Vishtaspa’s acceptance of the teachings of Zoroaster helped many others to see the truth of His Message. The queen and princes soon became followers, as did Zoroaster’s own family, relatives, and friends. Before long, the Zoroastrian faith had spread throughout the entire region of Medea and to all of Persia. By the end of His life on this earthly plane, the name Zoroaster was revered well beyond the borders of His native land, eastwards to India and westwards to Greece. He was seventy-two years old when His soul passed into the worlds beyond.

The Words and deeds of Zoroaster are recorded in a Holy Book called the Avesta, meaning Knowledge. Over time, the character of the people was completely transformed as they began to live according to His guidance, striving to exemplify the “good thoughts, good words and good deeds” that form the core of Zoroaster’s teachings. They became gentle and kind, courteous and hospitable. The promise of , prosperity was fulfilled and the kingdoms of Persia were eventually united, forming a strong empire known for its high standards of conduct.

**Facts:**

*You may wish to include the following information in the games you are devising to help the children retain important facts.*

(see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) for the fact cards for this lesson; they can be used in the way described in Lesson 2)

* Zoroaster was born in…Persia some three thousand years ago.
* At the age of twenty, Zoroaster went to a secluded place in the mountains where…He prayed and medicated, dedicating Himself to spiritual purification.
* Zoroaster was thirty years of age when…He received God’s Revelation.
* The Words and deeds of Zoroaster are recorded in…a Holy Book called the Avesta, which means knowledge.
* King Vishtaspa accepted Zoroaster’s teachings and…helped many others to see the truth of His Message.
* The character of the people of Persia was transformed by…the teachings of Zoroaster, as was the whole of society.
* A central teaching of Zoroaster is summed up in the statement…”good thoughts, good words, good deeds.”

Etc.

**Drama:**

Today you may help the children to act out the story of Zoroaster’s visit to the court of Vishtaspa, culminating in the king’s acceptance of Zoroaster’s Message. It is suggested that you serve as the narrator of the events, to ensure that no one inadvertently takes on the part of the Manifestation Himself in this rather extensive episode. The children, then, could act out the roles of Vishtaspa, the scheming priests, and joyful courtiers. Once the roles are assigned, you may help the children to develop the drama by asking them various questions, for example:

* How do the courtiers express the joy in their hearts?
* How does Vishtaspa react to Zoroaster’s words?
* What expressions and gestures does he use to show his eagerness to hear more?
* How do the priests act when Zoroaster first arrives?
* How does their reaction change?
* What might they say to each other in plotting to have Him banished d\form the court?

**Additional Games if doing this in 2 lessons:**

**Dead Ants Game**

**EQUIPMENT:**2-3 hula hoops

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Teamwork, Cooperation, Running, Evading, Dodging, and Strategy.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**Set-up the game by scattering the hoops randomly about the play area.  Select 1 players to be the "Raid Can".  The difficulty of this game can be adjusting by adding or subtracting the number of "its" (Raid Cans).  On the signal to begin, the "Raid Can" will begin to tag as many ants as possible.   When an ant is tagged, they must assume the dead ant position on the floor.  The dead ant position is laying on your back with your arms and legs extended toward the ceiling.  Dead ants must remain in this position until the game ends or they get rescued by the other ants.

     To Rescue the dead ants: To rescue a dead ant, four live ants must pick up the dead ant by his/her arms and legs (1 ant per appendage) and carry them to an open hoop.  Once the dead ant is placed into a hoop, they are immediately brought back to life.

     At the end of the round, 2-5 minutes, we will add up the number of dead ants.  If there are 3 or more dead ants on the floor, then the "Raid Can" wins the game.  However, if there are less than 3 dead ants on the floor, then the ants win the game.

     Misc. Rules:

          1.  You may not tag an ant that is attached to the arm or leg of a dead ant.

          2.  You must have 4 live ants to carry a dead ant.

**ADJUSTING THE GAME**:  As already stated, you can adjust the game by adding or subtracting the number of "Its".  Personally, I start with 2 "Its" and adjust by changing some of the rules.

     2nd and 3rd grade: I start with 2 "Its" and players may not be tagged if they are touching the arm or leg of a dead ant.  If this is too easy for the ants I add more "Its" or go to the 4th grade rules.

     4th Grade:  I start with 2 "Its" and students are only safe if there are 2 or more players attached to the arms and legs of an ant.  In other words, if you are the only player attached to the dead ant, you **can** still be tagged.  If this game is too easy, I will let them try the 5th grade version.

     5th Grade: I start with 2 "Its" and students are only safe if they have 4 players attached to the dead ants.  In other words, If 1,2, or 3 players are attached, they **can** still be tagged.

     6th and Up: Start with the 5th grade rules, but if it is too easy for the ants, then add more "Its".

**HELPFUL HINTS:** I really stress the idea of cooperation and teamwork.  I now use this game in my cooperative unit as students can work together to find strategies that improve the chances of winning.  Furthermore, I stress that the ants all win, or the all the ants do not win.  This helps them understand that they need to cooperate to win.

**Telephone:**

The children sit in a circle. One of them whispers a specific word into another ones ear and the rest have to try and carry the message back to the person that started it. (can highlight how this is what happens with gossip and also what can happen with religion as things are past down and interpreted.)

**Art/Drawing:** To remind the children that the Manifestations of God come to help us give forth the fruits of goodly deeds and praiseworthy character, you could ask the children to draw a tree bearing fruit. (You could use watercolor, collage, or other mediums for drawing the tree bearing fruit)

You might think of other possibilities, however, to underscore in their minds the power of such deeds to transform the world.

Other ideas for art- could do a collage of pictures cut from magazines with uplifting images with the quote “The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct.” (see example at [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson, as well as the quote that you can cut and have ready for them to glue onto their collage)

**Alternatives:** (see Peace Pack worksheets on [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson)

**Review:** As a final activity before closing prayers, review with the children the passage they learned today and the following one they memorized in Grade 2:

“The supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity.” –Abdu’l-Baha

(see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson for this quote written in a 4 x 6 format)

**Supreme**

1. Everything in the universe was created by God. He is the Supreme Creator.
2. More than anything else, Daniel wants to serve his fellow human beings. His supreme wish is to serve others.

**Cooperation**

1. It is not unusual to see two or three ants carrying a large bit of food together. Only when they cooperate can ants carry such large, heavy objects.
2. When everyone works together to reach a goal, they feel united and happy. Cooperation helps to build unity.

**Reciprocity**

1. The village where Zhu Li lives grows many vegetables and other crops. Li Li lives in the village nearby that raises animals. Each village provides the other with what it needs. Because of reciprocity, both villages prosper.
2. Meera has plenty of water in her well and helps Fabio by watering the plants in his garden. Fabio is good at climbing and helps Meera by picking fruit from the trees in her yard. Fabio and Meera understand the importance of reciprocity.

**Closing Prayer**