

# 4

# Embrace Simplicity

LUKE 10:38-42



## GOAL

By hearing the story of Mary and Martha's interaction with Jesus, young children consider how embracing less can lead to more quality time with Jesus.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Lord, help me not overcomplicate your message. Remove any distractions so I may clearly see the love you have for these children and properly receive them in your name. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

This session introduces the spiritual practice of embracing simplicity. Stuff—even good stuff—can distract us from experiencing what is most important and meaningful in life. Clearing the clutter can help us see Christ more clearly as we follow him.

## THE BIBLE STORY

After inviting Jesus and his disciples to their home, Martha becomes preoccupied with hosting duties. Meanwhile, her sister Mary chooses to listen to Jesus while sitting at his feet. “Lord, don’t you care?” implores Martha. In this story, Jesus reminds her and us how distractions can get in the way of drawing near to him.

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children lack purchasing power. They do not control their calendars. So rather than focusing on the acquisition of stuff or simplifying schedules, children will experience how *more* things can keep us away from the things and people that are truly important. Young children can be imaginative and find fun in a cardboard box and bubble wrap!

## SESSION PREPARATION

- “Do-It-Yourself Instruments” (p. 40): Make one of each of the following instruments as an example. Set up a station with the supplies to make each instrument:
  - Harp/guitar supplies: empty tissue boxes, shoeboxes, or shallow rectangular plastic containers; large rubber bands
  - Shaker supplies: empty plastic beverage bottles with twist-on caps, pea gravel or colorful pony beads
  - Rhythm stick supplies: empty paper towel rolls and/or 12” dowel rods
  - Horn supplies: empty toilet paper rolls
- “*More!*” (p. 40): Obtain *More!* by Tracey Corderoy (Tiger Tales, 2015) or use the YouTube video “Ms. Tarrant: *More!* by Tracey Corderoy and Ill by Tim Warnes” ([bit.ly/FMMoreBook](https://bit.ly/FMMoreBook), 5:33).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Mother Teresa” (p. 41): Obtain *Little People, BIG DREAMS - Mother Teresa* by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara (Frances Lincoln Children’s Books; 2018) or use the YouTube video “Little People Big Dreams - Mother Teresa” ([bit.ly/FMMotherTeresa](https://bit.ly/FMMotherTeresa), 3:15).



## GETTING STARTED

- Prepared musical instruments
- Markers, stickers, washi tape
- Harp/guitar station
- Shaker station
- Rhythm stick station
- Horn station

### DO-IT-YOURSELF INSTRUMENTS



Greet children as they arrive. Introduce them to the stations you have set up with the musical instruments you have prepared and the supplies for making each. Invite the children to create a musical instrument using the materials provided. Give guidance as needed, but let the children take the lead.

- Harp/guitar: Place rubber bands around an empty tissue box, shoebox (without the lid), or shallow, rectangular plastic container. Decorate with markers, stickers, and/or washi tape.
- Shaker: Place pea gravel or colorful pony beads inside an empty plastic bottle. Put on the twist-on cap. Decorate with stickers and/or washi tape.
- Rhythm sticks: Decorate empty paper towel rolls and/or dowel rods with markers, stickers, and/or washi tape.
- Horn: Decorate an empty toilet paper roll with markers, stickers, and/or washi tape.

Invite the children to play their instruments. Comment how music can be made with simple supplies. Wonder together what other ways music could be made. Have the children try making sounds with their bodies: clap hands; stomp feet; pat chest, tummy, and thighs; whistle; and so forth. Set aside instruments for “Live Simply Through Music” (p. 42).

### DRAWING NEAR TO GOD



The opening ritual in this unit includes a responsive litany with one line changing to correspond to the spiritual discipline in each session. There are motions to help children learn their responses. The children’s response is printed in the bold text and remains the same throughout this unit.

Draw near to God

**and God** (*raise both arms to the sky*)

**will draw near to us.** (*bring hands toward heart, crossing them over your heart*)

When we embrace simplicity, we untangle our lives so we can focus on loving and serving God.

**Let us** (*extend arms forward, palms facing upward*)

**keep company** (*bend elbows and bring together hands in prayer*)

**with Jesus.** (*sign “Jesus” with hands using right middle finger to touch the middle of left palm and repeat with left middle finger to touch the middle of right palm*)



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- More!* by Tracey Corderoy (Tiger Tales, 2015) or internet-connected device

### MORE!



In *More!* by Tracey Corderoy, a little rhino rethinks his enthusiasm for *more* as his friends help him get out of a tight situation. Teach children how to sign *more* by placing all of their fingertips and thumb together on each

hand and tapping both hands together at the tips. Encourage the children to sign “more” every time they hear the word in the story. Read “*More!*” by Tracey Corderoy or show the YouTube video “Ms. Tarrant: More! by Tracey Corderoy and Ill by Tim Warnes” ([bit.ly/FMMoreBook](https://bit.ly/FMMoreBook), 5:33; stopping at 4:44). Discuss the story using the following questions:

- What did Otto enjoy more of in this story, and why do you think he liked more of these things?
- What different problems did Otto have when he wore his costume?
- How do you think Otto felt when he got stuck in the bushes?
- Why do you think Otto thought, “Maybe ‘more’ wasn’t always more fun. Maybe ‘more’ was sometimes too much”?
- By having less of his costume, what can Otto enjoy more of at the party?
- What does “less is more” mean? Where might this be a good idea?



In some print versions, the little rhino is named Archie.



Also see the YouTube video “How to Sign MORE—Baby Sign Language/ASL” ([bit.ly/FMMoreSign](https://bit.ly/FMMoreSign), 0:10).

## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### DISCUSSION AND DRAMA



Tell the children that there is a Bible story about Jesus and two of his friends, Martha and Mary. Explain that Mary and Martha get to spend time with Jesus. Martha chooses to prepare a meal, and Mary chooses to sit at Jesus’ feet while he speaks. Martha’s choice requires more effort, energy, and time. As the day goes on, she discovers maybe *more* isn’t always better.

Review the sign for *more* with the children from “*More!*” (p. 40). Encourage them to sign *more* each time they hear that word in the Bible story. Read the adapted Bible story from Luke 10:38–43 on Resource Page 1.

Reflect on the story with the children using the following questions:

- How are the two sisters similar and different?
- What did each do more of in this story?
- What is good about Martha’s choice?
- What is good about Mary’s choice?
- Why might Jesus say Mary made a better choice for Mary?

Invite the children to act out the Bible story. Offer the props to the children and ask them to re-tell the story. Wonder together how Martha might respond after Jesus says Mary has chosen what is better. Encourage the children to imagine at least two alternative endings.

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- Resource Page 1
  - Cleaning and cooking props such as a broom, dust rag, wooden spoon, pitcher
  - Puppets or stuffed animals



If there are not enough children, puppets or plush toys can stand in for different characters.

## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

### MOTHER TERESA



Tell the children that there was a remarkable woman called Mother Teresa. Explain that Mother Teresa loved God and lived a very simple life so she could focus on God and do God’s work. Read *Little People, BIG DREAMS - Mother Teresa* by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara or show the YouTube video “Little People Big Dreams - Mother Teresa” ([bit.ly/FMMotherTeresa](https://bit.ly/FMMotherTeresa), 3:15).

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- Little People, BIG DREAMS - Mother Teresa* by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara (Frances Lincoln Children’s Books; 2018) or internet-connected device

After the story, highlight the following quotations from the story.

- “She knew the smallest things could make the biggest difference.”
- “It doesn’t matter if you do big or small things in your life, as long as you do them with great love.”

Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- Do you agree with those quotations from the story? Why or why not?
- What were some of the things Mother Teresa and her friends did with great love?
- Would you consider these small things or big things? Why?
- Where do you see others doing things with great love: In your family? In your school or daycare? In your church? In your neighborhood?
- What are some things you can do with great love: at home, at school or daycare, at church, in your neighborhood?
- What are some things we can do as a group with great love?

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- Copies of Resource Pages 2 and 3
  - Markers and crayons

## QUOTATIONS

A

Tell the children about two people who loved and followed God: Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa. They lived very simply so they could focus their lives on doing God’s work. Tell the children that Francis of Assisi lived long ago. He loved birds and animals and trees and flowers. He loved helping others. Mother Teresa worked in the country of India and helped the poorest of the poor.

Provide copies of Resource Pages 2 and 3, markers, and crayons. Read the quotations from Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa. Reflect on these quotations with the children. Wonder together what these quotations mean. Work together to say each quotation in the children’s own words to help them understand them.

Invite the children to color one or both of the quotations and draw a picture about what it means. Encourage the children to take their papers home and display them so they can remember these important words.



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Musical instruments from “Do-It-Yourself Instruments” (p. 40)
  - Internet-connected device

## LIVING SIMPLY THROUGH MUSIC

M T AM

Embracing simplicity reminds us that one does not need a lot to draw near to God. Something as simple as humming or singing a song can help remind us of God’s presence and desire to spend time with us.

Teach the children new words to the familiar Shaker song “Simple Gifts.” Play the music from the YouTube video “Simple Gifts with 4 Cellos” ([bit.ly/FMSimpleGiftsCellos](https://bit.ly/FMSimpleGiftsCellos), 2:57) so the children may hear the tune. Sing a line at a time of the verse, having the children repeat after you. Sing the whole verse with the music. Then do the same with the chorus. As the children practice singing the song together, invite them to play the instruments they made in “Do-It-Yourself Instruments” (p. 40).

Verse:

It’s a gift to live simply  
where we serve and we love.

It's a gift to follow our great God above.  
When we walk with Jesus and keep company with him,  
we will play and we'll dance as we sing this hymn.

Chorus:

When true simplicity is found  
our hearts are with God, our feet on the ground.  
To give love will be our delight,  
and by giving and loving, we live in God's light.



To extend this activity, work together to create motions to go along with the song. Sing the song using the motions.

## SIMPLE PLAY



Helping children find pleasure in simple things may encourage them to grow into individuals who do not need more than *enough* or who fill their lives with unnecessary material goods. Tell the children that they are going to use their imagination to play with an item. Explain that you will give them a simple object, and they need to think of ways to play with that item.

Have the children form pairs or allow them to work on their own if they choose. Provide each pair or individual an item such as a piece of string, a box, a ball, a paper lunch bag, a stick, a spoon, a pillow, or a piece of fabric. Invite the children to imagine at least three ways they could play with their object. Encourage them to consider that they might pretend that it is something else. For example, maybe a pillow is a baby, or a box is a car. Suggest that they wonder what they could do with their object as an art project, in outdoor play, or as something make-believe.

Have the children take turns demonstrating and sharing their ideas about their objects. After each child or pair has a turn, wonder with the group what other ways the object could be used. Marvel at all the wonderful and imaginative ways the children have played with such simple objects. Encourage them to try this activity at home with their family.

- Variety of simple objects for children to use their imagination, such as a piece of string, a box, a ball, a paper lunch bag, a stick, a spoon, a pillow, or a piece of fabric



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### COME AND SEE



Introduce the song you are singing to close each session of this unit. It is sung to the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down." Teach the chorus by singing one line at a time. Then have the children sing the chorus with you. Teach the verse of the song in the same way. Invite the children to sing the chorus and the verse using rhythm instruments, if you choose.

Chorus:

Jesus says to come and see, come and see, come and see.  
Jesus wants to be with me.  
I love Jesus!

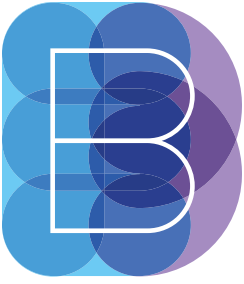
Verse:

Sometimes more is not so good; less is more, less is more.  
To spend more time with Jesus,  
clear the clutter!

- Rhythm instruments (optional)



The chorus of the song is repeated in each session of this unit. The verse changes to reflect the spiritual practice highlighted in that session.



## BIBLE STORY

### BASED ON LUKE 10:38–42

“Jesus is in town!” an excited Martha exclaimed as she ran into the house carrying baskets full of food from the market. “Mary, we must begin cooking!” she called to her sister. A huge smile spread on Mary’s face. Jesus was here! But before she could say a word, Martha continued speaking. “I already invited Jesus to the house. I insisted he and his disciples come today for a decent homecooked meal. Can you imagine how tired Jesus must be, always traveling and taking care of others? Now he can be taken care of for a change.”

When Jesus and his disciples arrived, the sisters gladly welcomed them into their home. Martha and Mary were so happy they could spend time with Jesus. “Please sit down, Jesus,” Martha graciously offered. “Oh wait, let me just wipe away that dirt on the bench. OK, now you can sit. You must be thirsty.” And just as quickly as she talked, Martha walked off to get drinks.

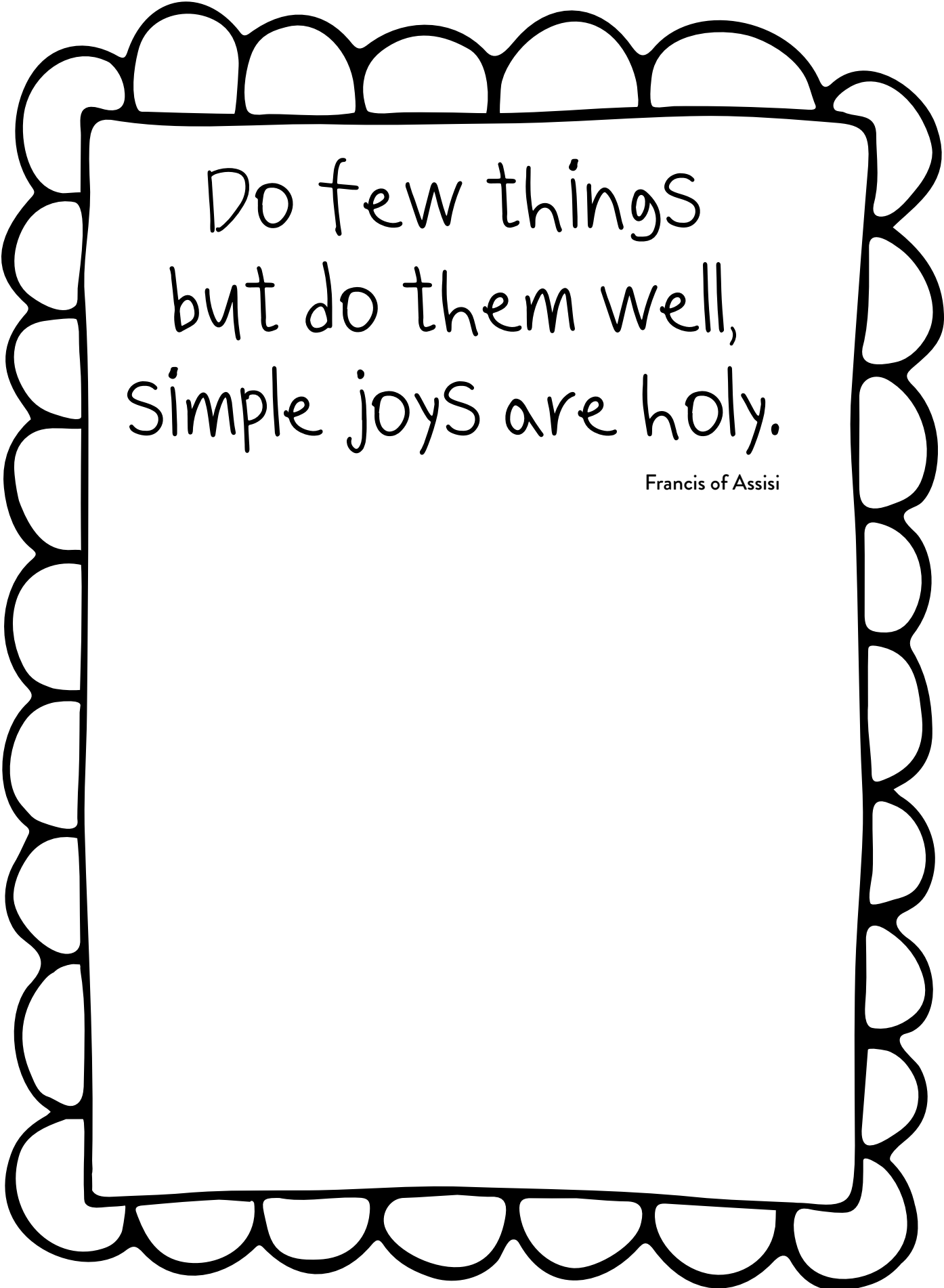
Mary was about to follow her sister to help. But as Jesus sat down, he began to speak. Mary loved hearing Jesus speak. He always told such marvelous and interesting stories. So instead of leaving, Mary sat by his feet to hear more.

Which is where Martha found Mary, as she rushed back to Jesus with the drinks. Not wanting to interrupt what Jesus was saying, Martha tried to quietly get her sister’s attention. “Ahem,” Martha cleared her throat as she looked directly at Mary. Martha hoped Mary would get up and help her. When Mary did not respond, a frustrated Martha left to finish preparing the meal by herself.

As she cooked, Martha kept thinking of all the things that needed to be done: sweep the floors, wash the table, refill the water pitchers. More cleaning! More cooking! More things to do! Why wasn’t Mary helping her?! Didn’t she understand how important this was?

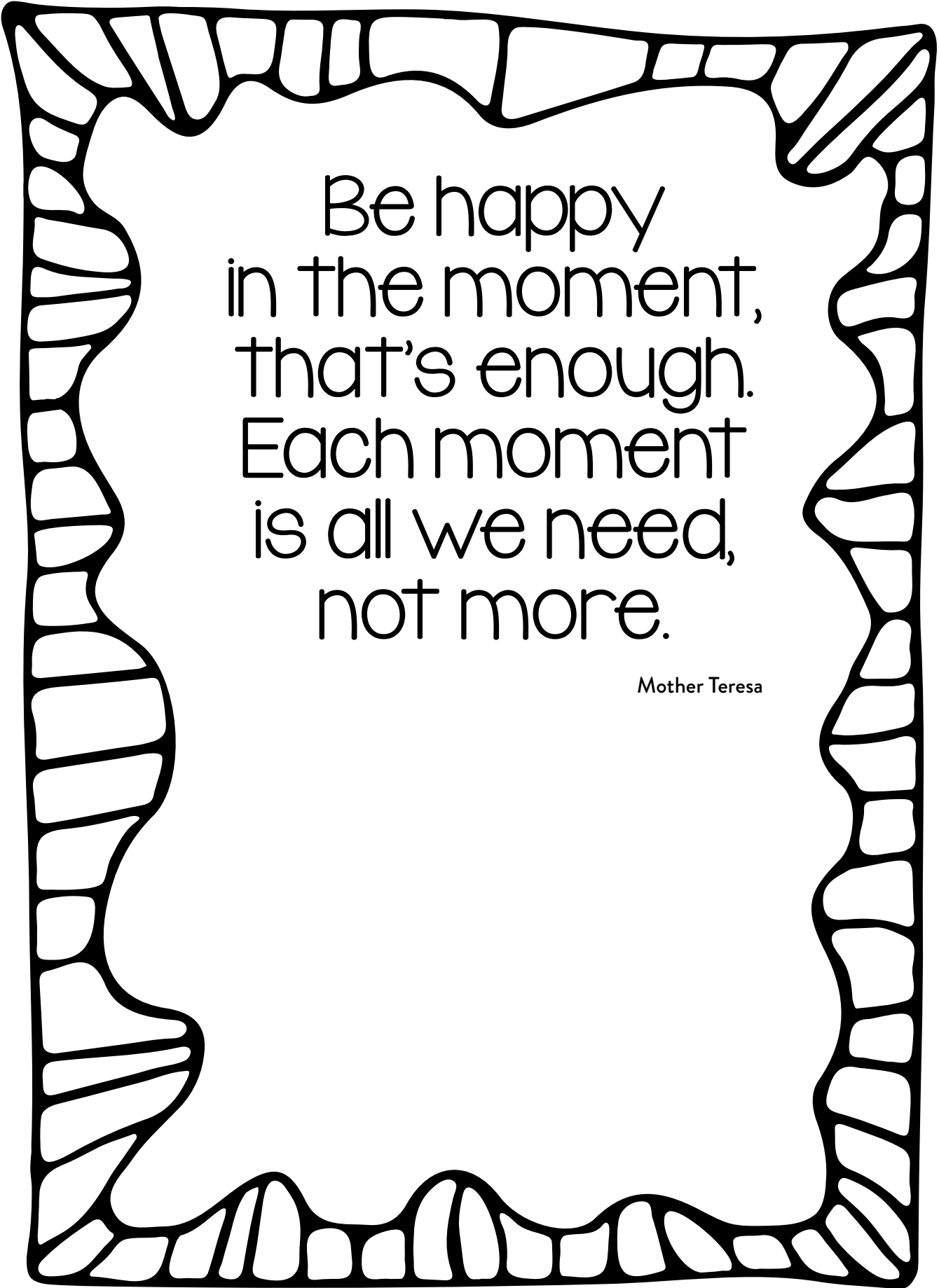
As she stirred the pot, Martha could hear the laughter of Jesus, his disciples, and even Mary. As the stew in the pot started to boil, so did Martha’s frustration. Martha marched up to Jesus, “Lord! Don’t you care that I’m by myself when there is still so much more to be done! Tell my sister to help!”

Looking up at her, Jesus replied, “Martha, Martha. I care about you. You are worried because you keep getting distracted by more and more things to do while I am here. But few things are needed right now—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.



Do few things  
but do them well,  
Simple joys are holy.

Francis of Assisi



Be happy  
in the moment,  
that's enough.  
Each moment  
is all we need,  
not more.

Mother Teresa