



FRANCIS — AND — FRIENDS



**FAMILY
GUIDEBOOK**

Have you already joined the Francis and Friends Club?

This workbook is a companion to the Following the Way® with Francis and Friends family faith and nature program. For more information and to register for access to all of the videos, activities, and other resources, please visit

www.francisandfriends.org

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Welcome to the Francis and Friends Clubhouse!

Our children are only young once. Time flies and they grow fast. There is no better time to enjoy being with your kids than right now. They will never be this age again.

I know life is busy. I know you have umpteen other things to do today. They can wait. Your children need your time, love and attention today.

But what do you do with them? You could go to the movies or watch TV. You could sort through their closets. You could read them a book. All of these things are fine to do.

But what they really want to do with you is PLAY and make MEMORIES! Do you remember how to play? No? That's ok. It's easy to forget.

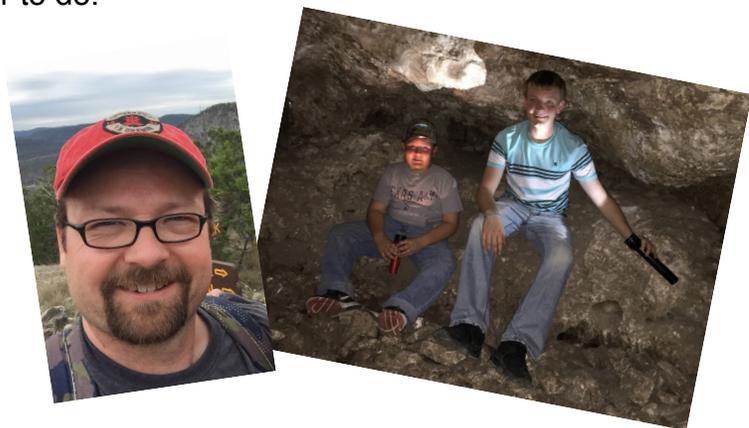
It's also easy to learn again. Your children will show you how. Just breathe, relax, and set aside your worries for an hour or two. It will do you good. And it will do your children a LOT of good to see you play.

Trust me. I know from experience (both good and bad). We all need to play more. Here's your invitation.

Watch a video, choose an activity (or even two or three). They are simple and low cost. You may learn a thing or two which is great. You may do something to help someone else which is great too. But above all - PLAY with your kids and ENJOY the gift of this life. Time in nature makes it easier to do.

Your friend,
Rich

*Rich and boys at Garner State Park
(Texas)*



Introduction

God loves everything God has made

The introductory unit introduces children to all of the characters in the program, Danny the Donkey, Olivia the Owl, Sally the Squirrel, Francis, Clare and Rich. The themes of a loving God, the wonderful world God created, and our relationship with everything else in creation are emphasized.



Video reflection

Danny, Olivia, Sally and Rich love to be outside. What is your favorite place outside?

Francis explains the Great Commandment and lists four different ways we can love God. Can you remember what all four are? (If not, read Mark 12:30 on the next page).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Francis also read his poem “The Canticle of the Creatures.” He talked about Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brothers Wind and Air, Sister Water, Brother Fire, and Sister Earth. What is your favorite thing about nature? What makes it so special to you?



Canticle connection

The Francis and Friends adventure is built around St. Francis of Assisi's best known writing, "The Canticle of the Creatures." In this Canticle, Francis describes a world in which all of creation is understood to be our sisters and brothers. This is a beautiful worldview and adopting it would go a long way towards greater care for the environment, less fear and conflict, and greater global awareness and peace. Helping you encourage this kind of worldview in your children is a significant purpose of the Francis and Friends program. Each of the other four units (Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength) lifts up one line of the canticle and one aspect of creation (Brother Fire, Sister Water, Sister Earth, and Brother Wind). In this Introduction Unit, you will do the "Create your own Canticle" activity below to help your child explore the beauty of Francis' Canticle and incorporate this into their own Canticle they will create.

Developmental connection

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - At this age, children are really beginning to explore the world around themselves in independent ways. Allow your child to take the lead in some activities. Give them instructions in simple steps.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - At this age, children are becoming more aware of their place in the world. Ask them what they think and honor their ideas and opinions even if they are not fully formed yet.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - At this age, children are facing more complex challenges in their daily life. Encourage them to describe the world they see around them.

Scripture connection: Mark 12:30

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

Commonly called The Great Commandment, this quote from Jesus is actually a repetition of the Shema, the foundational faith statement of the Jewish faith. Moses tells all the faithful to keep these words on their minds at all times, to receive them when they get up in the morning and go to bed at night, and to teach them to their children. These words are to be understood as the framework for living a fulfilled and faithful life. These words are the backbone of Francis and Friends and the other related Following the Way® programs.

Introduction Activities



In the four other units (Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength) you will have a variety of activities to choose from. For this first unit, however, there are just two. Both of these activities will help you complete the entire Francis and Friends program!

1. Create your own Canticle

On the next page, you will find a copy of Francis' Canticle. Read through it again with your child and talk about each of the things Francis calls sister or brother. Ask your child to talk about how important each of these things are to them and your family. We need every one of them to help us live!

Then on the following page is a place for your child to create their own canticle poem. Encourage them to write or draw a picture about things that are important to them. Post both Francis' canticle and your child's canticle someplace where they will be reminded daily of the importance of each part of creation, the family of God.

2. Create your own Passport

Throughout this program, your family will get to "choose your own adventure" as you select which activities you will do that go along with each unit. If you do 5 or more activities in each of the Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength units, you can log on to the website and print off an achievement certificate for each unit. Get all four certificates and you can write a note to Francis and Clare and ask them to send you your Francis and Friends completion medal in the mail.

Download the Passport on the Introduction Unit's webpage. It will help you track your progress. Watch the instruction video on the website to see how to assemble the Passport.



THE CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

(earliest and simplest version)
by St. Francis of Assisi

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, honor and blessings.

To you alone, Most High, do they belong;
no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

We praise You, Lord, for all Your creatures,
especially for Brother Sun,
who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
of You Most High, he bears your likeness.

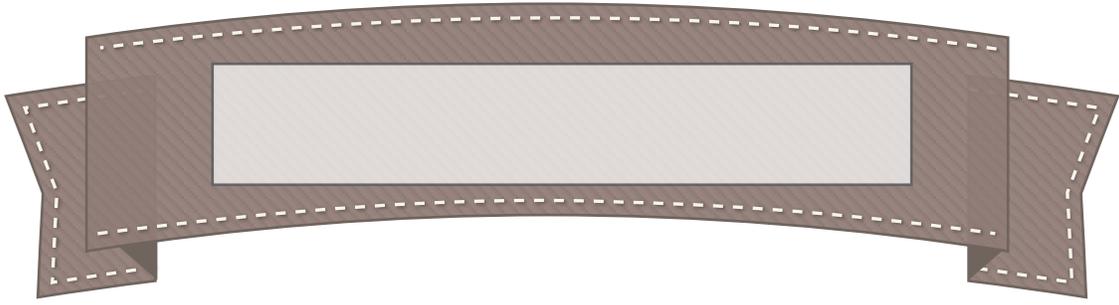
We praise You, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

We praise You, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,
fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Water,
so useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise You, Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night.
He is beautiful, playful, robust, and strong.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Earth,
who sustains us
with her fruits, colored flowers, and herbs.



by _____

Heart

We are called to help others

Early in his life, Francis had a profound experience that showed him that he was called to love and care for others, especially people that society had rejected. In the Heart unit we see that we too are called to care for others, sharing what we have with them and learning to truly love our neighbors as ourself.



Video reflection

In our video today, Danny the Donkey is afraid of the dark. What are you afraid of?

In the cartoon, Francis learns to overcome his fears and care for others. Why do you think he was afraid? What changed his mind?

Olivia the Owl helps Danny to not be afraid. We can overcome our fears to help others too. Who is someone you know who needs your help? How can you help them?



Canticle connection: Brother Fire (plus Brother Sun and Sister Moon)

In the Canticle of the Creatures, it says that Brother Sun “bears the likeness of God.” Like God, Brother Sun is the source of all life and light. Like us, Sister Moon is a reflection of the sun, casting light to dark places. And Brother Fire is “beautiful, playful, robust and strong.” How can our reflection and co-creation of the light and love of God be done in a way that we too are “beautiful, playful, robust and strong?”

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Heart is about serving others and caring about justice for all.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - At this age, life can be pretty scary. There is a lot of unknown and many real dangers (traffic, fire, water, strangers, etc.). Help your child understand why some things are dangerous and how to stay safe.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - At this age, children are able to talk through their feelings more. Ask them to describe what makes them afraid. Assure them you are there to love and support them. What do they think makes other people afraid? Is there a way we can help them like Olivia helped Danny?

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - At this age, children can begin to understand the feelings of others and put themselves in their shoes. Ask your child about people who are less fortunate. How do they feel about that? What do they consider unfair or unjust about the world? What can your family do to help?

Scripture connection: Mark 1:40-42

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Jesus is an example of someone who helped other people at great personal risk. Sometimes, helping others will put us at risk too by either making us socially outcast, pushing us beyond our perceived limits, and at times even putting us in physical danger. How can your family balance the needs for safety and personal comfort with the responsibility of helping others who are in need?



Heart activities

You will find a variety of activities in the Heart Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Caring for others
2. Light (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Choose from a variety of these activities. Or you can always create your own activity too. You can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Heart Unit.

Don't forget to track your progress on your Passport! When you have completed at least 5 of the activities, let Francis and Clare know using the online message form so you can get a Heart completion certificate your child can proudly display.

www.francisandfriends.org

Soul

We are called to live as members of one family

Francis and Clare created communities of brothers and sisters which extended out to all people and even all other creatures. In the Soul unit we hear the story of how Francis made friends with Brother Wolf, whom everyone else feared and hated.



Video reflection

Why do you think Sally the Squirrel didn't want to share the same tree with Olivia the Owl?

Have you ever had something you didn't want to share with someone else?
What happened?

Francis helps the people of Gubbio make peace and share with the wolf. Why do you think the wolf decided to become friends with people?



Olivia and Sally decide to share with each other. What is something you have that you could share with someone?

Canticle connection: Sister Water

The Canticle describes Sister Water as “useful, humble, precious and pure.” Think of all the ways water is useful, all the many ways we depend on water. Water is humble, always seeking out the lowest places. Water is precious, and increasingly we realize how fragile our water supply can be. Water is pure, synonymous with cleansing and renewal. How can we appreciate the gift of water and seek to embody these same qualities ourselves?

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Soul is about creating loving, healthy relationships with God, self and others.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - The relationships children at this age have with others (both positive and negative) will have a lifelong impact on their personality and sense of self-worth. Give your children plenty of attention, encouragement and recognition to make sure you are developing a healthy parent/child relationship. Encourage them to play with other children and learn to share.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - Children at this age are more aware of the ways they can affect relationships rather than only receive them. They are able to focus on the needs of others and not just their own. Encourage them to be understanding, compassionate, and give other people the benefit of the doubt when they don't understand their actions.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - At this age, children begin to have more independence from the family and are able to establish relationships on their own. They become more susceptible to peer pressure (both positive and negative). Talk with them about the importance of knowing how to handle people who may not have the best of intentions and discern where those intentions are coming from.

Scripture connection: Matthew 22:39

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Water has both adhesive and cohesive properties. Which is to say it is attracted to both that which is not water and that which is water. (Test it out with drops of water to see.) Likewise we are called to love those who are the similar to us and those who are different, to love our neighbor as ourself. How can something as simple as water remind us of this call and help us to live it out in our daily lives?

Soul Activities



Loving God with all our Soul is about having good, loving, healthy relationship with God, with others, and with ourself.

Soul Activities

You will find a variety of activities in the Soul Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Developing peace-filled relationships
2. Water (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Choose from a variety of these activities. Or you can always create your own activity too. You can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Soul Unit.

Don't forget to track your progress on your Passport! When you have completed at least 5 of the activities, let Francis and Clare know using the online message form so you can get a Soul completion certificate your child can proudly display.

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Mind

We are called to live in God's kingdom

The world came alive for Francis when he realized that we are all a part of one big family. He would even release rabbits from traps, fish from nets and birds on their way to the market so they could enjoy life longer. In our Mind unit, we come to see the interconnectedness of creation and the joy of understanding everyone's place in it.



Video reflection

Danny the Donkey didn't want to help take care of the barnyard. Why don't you think he wanted to help?

Have you ever had to help with something you didn't want to do?

Francis helps a boy have compassion on the doves he intends to sell to greedy men. How can you help someone deal with bullies?

Danny realizes that we all have our own special and honored place in creation. How can you show more respect and care for others?



Canticle connection: Sister Earth

We are accustomed to referring to “Mother Earth,” and with good reason. The earth gives life to all living creatures. Here, Francis refers to Sister Earth and I wonder how that changes the relationship? Just as a mother can provide for us and we are grateful, at times a mother may provide for us and we take her for granted or even reject the love she offers. Sisters, on the other hand, are not so easily ignored. I am an older brother and feel as sense of protection for my sisters. They also can be frustrating with all their own ideas about how things should go, which do not always align with how I think things should go. A sister is someone you may argue with, but usually deep down you love them and want only the best for them. How can an image of “Sister Earth” help us remember to be more protective and loving towards her?

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Mind is about a correct worldview, honoring all people and seeing creation as holy.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - Encourage language development by reading to your preschooler and speaking to them in complete sentences. (It may be hard to drop the sweet baby talk but now is the time.) Read books that encourage openness and wonder. A list of books about St. Francis is included in the Francis and Friends’ Parent Introduction resource.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - Begin to introduce your child to the wider world. Seek out experiences of travel or multi-cultural events to broaden their horizons. Reinforce the message that God loves all people and all of creation and we have a special role to play in loving people, plants, and animals.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - Be actively involved and interested in your child’s ongoing intellectual development. Ask them about their emerging worldview and their reaction to issues in the news. Be accepting of where they are developmentally while also encouraging them to see things from perspectives other than just their own.

Scripture connection: Luke 18:15-17

People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

Encouraging faith formation of our children is not about “teaching them things.” Jesus says they largely already get it. It is rather more about encouraging them to hold onto their innocence, trustfulness and loving outlook in the face of a world that can easily make us resentful, suspicious and jaded.



Mind Activities

You will find a variety of activities in the Mind Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Creation is holy and appreciating everything's place in God's family
2. Land (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Choose from a variety of these activities. Or you can always create your own activity too. You can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Mind Unit.

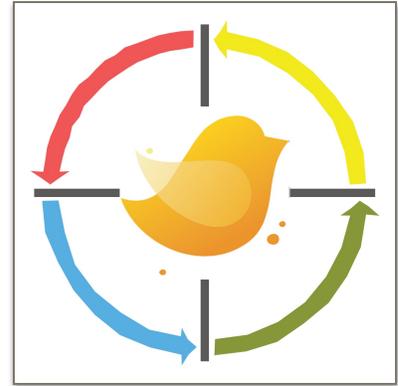
Don't forget to track your progress on your Passport! When you have completed at least 5 of the activities, let Francis and Clare know using the online message form so you can get a Mind completion certificate your child can proudly display.

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Strength

We are called to live simply and joyfully

Our children are bombarded with advertisements and consumerism, even though we know that the best things in life cannot be bought. In our Strength unit, we hear the story of Francis preaching to the birds to live fully into their “bird-nature” and consider how we too already have the gifts from God we truly need.

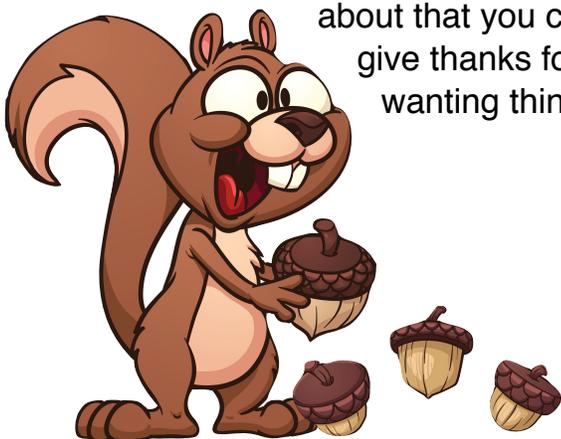


Video reflection

Sally is storing up nuts for the winter and is worried she doesn't have enough. Is there anything you worry you may not have enough of? How does that make you feel?

Francis and Clare decided they didn't need a bunch of “stuff” to be happy. They found happiness in simple, everyday things. What is something you already have that you can learn to enjoy more?

Sally realized she didn't need to worry after all. There were plenty of nuts to get her family through the winter. What is something you worry about that you could choose to not worry about? Remember to give thanks for what you do have instead of focus on wanting things you don't have.



Canticle connection: Brother Wind

Like everything else in creation, Wind has the power to be either constructive or destructive. The entire weather system of our planet depends on the movements of the wind. These can bring us much needed warmer or cooler temperatures. They can bring us both rain and drought. They can bring us beautiful white clouds or hurricanes and tornadoes. Francis gives thanks for “all weather’s moods.” The Strength Unit is about becoming more accepting of things as they are, finding the goodness in what is, and appreciating a life of simplicity.

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Strength is about living with joy, being present in the now, and being content with less when society tries to convince us we always need more.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - Make sure you are offering a variety of healthy choices to your child so they can develop an interest in them. Healthy food and drink options, things to do that don’t involve looking at a screen, and toys and games that require them to be physically active can all go a long way to helping them establish healthy patterns.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - Continue to ensure you are offering a variety of healthy choices for your child when it comes to nutrition and entertainment. Time spent outdoors naturally leads to increase physical activity. What new things are they able to do with their bigger bodies as far as climbing, hiking, etc. Longer attention spans will open up more possibilities as well.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - Involve your child in family decision making. Talk through what you will spend time and money on for holidays, vacations, entertainment, etc. Discuss ways in which choosing simpler options may allow more freedom, as well as extra time and money to spend elsewhere - perhaps in a way that helps others.

Scripture connection: Matthew 6:25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ... So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

There is, perhaps, a thin line between blatant naivety and a hopeful faith. Here Jesus isn’t saying food and clothing isn’t important. He is saying to put first things first (“strive first for the kingdom of God”) and trust that the material things will be there as you need them to be. This speaks loudly to a world that yearns for material possessions.



Strength Activities

You will find a variety of activities in the Strength Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Living with joy, simplicity, and physical well-being
2. Air (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Choose from a variety of these activities. Or you can always create your own activity too. You can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Strength Unit.

Don't forget to track your progress on your Passport! When you have completed at least 5 of the activities, let Francis and Clare know using the online message form so you can get a Strength completion certificate your child can proudly display.

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A Special Offer

Ready to share the Faith and Nature fun with other families? Consider starting up a Francis and Friends Nature Club!



Or you can use the Francis and Friends program as a Vacation Bible School or fun event for your Sunday School or private school.

To learn more about our Group Membership, visit:

www.francisandfriends.org

Special Discount: 25% off the purchase of a Group Membership for those who have already purchased a Family Membership. Just enter coupon code: DISCOUNT231 at checkout.

sale