

**Howard Thurman's Closeness to God**  
Monica Tetzlaff, South Bend Indiana Monthly Meeting

**Age Range:** 6 – 13 years

**Preparation Time:** 45 minutes

- Obtain book (can borrow from public library): Kai Jackson Issa, *Howard Thurman's Great Hope*
- Preview video: Landrum Bolling interview with Howard Thurman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGX4-Wv9UD0>
- Gather art supplies: Paper, crayons, markers
- Practice moon salutation: <http://iymsrishikesh.org/moon-salutation-or-chandra-namaskar-in-yoga/>

**Opening**

*[Begin with yoga "moon salutation" or simple stretching and then breathing in "I am close to God" for a count of 4 and breathing out "peace" for a count of 4.]*

To children, "These movements are to help us get ready for the story."

**Introduction to Howard Thurman**

"Howard Thurman was an African-American writer, teacher and civil rights leader. He was not a Quaker, but he became a close friend of Quakers. His writings have been published by Friends United Press and read by many Quakers. Thurman's preaching on love and nonviolent resistance influenced Martin Luther King. Howard Thurman studied Jesus deeply. He taught about how we should use love while we speak out against things that are wrong."

**Video**

"Let's listen to Howard Thurman talk about how he experienced closeness to God when he was a boy."

*[Instructions: Play a segment of the Landrum interview with Howard Thurman on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGX4-Wv9UD0>*

- *Begin with, "My world was surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Halifax River..."*
- *The most important part is, "... In our backyard was a large oak tree, which was my companion and my comfort. ... I had a sense from my earliest memory of being a part of the rhythmic flow of life. I would talk aloud to God in this setting."*
- *End with, "This had more religious meaning for me than the things we did in church." (about 4 minutes).]*

**Story**

"I will read a book about Howard Thurman when he was your age and we will talk about it."

*[Plan 15 minutes for reading the story.]*

*[Ask wondering questions:]*

I wonder what it was like for Howard to be near the old oak tree?

I wonder what he felt looking at the dark night sky?

I wonder how Howard felt when his father died?

I wonder how Howard was able to work so hard?

I wonder how Howard felt when the stranger gave him money to ship his trunk?

I wonder how Howard felt when he grew up and met Martin Luther King?

I wonder what it would be like for you to talk with Howard Thurman?

I wonder if you have a special place that you can go and feel close to God?

**Art project: Your sacred space**

"Use the art supplies to create a garden or other sacred space where you feel close to God. If you want to include parts of the story you can, or it can be your own special garden."

**Alternative:** *Make up body movements that go with the story. You can use the Yoga – "Moon Salutation," which includes star positions and/or make up your own.*