

# READ★PRAY★WONDER★PLAY

## A GUIDE TO SHARING STORIES WITH CHILDREN

### Sidney the Lonely Cloud

By Tim Hopgood

What must it feel like when no one seems to be excited about the things that you have to offer? This question is at the heart of the story *Sidney the Lonely Cloud*. All of us, children and adults alike, can relate to the feeling of being disappointed when we go out for a picnic or other outdoor event only to see a cloudy sky. This story invites readers to find the unexpected gift from something that at first seemed disappointing or undesirable.

With its simple message and dramatic, colorful illustrations, this book can be a launching point for conversations on topics such as empathy, inclusion, and acceptance, as well as exploring the variety of ways that each of us are gifted and skilled. Perhaps most importantly, this story highlights the joy in finding the hidden blessings that can be found in moments when things do not go how we hoped or imagined they would.



### ★ ★ WONDER TOGETHER ★ ★

- Anyone who has ever spent any time in full sun on a hot day knows first-hand the gift of a cloud, even if they would not name “cloudy” as their favorite weather. When was a time when you were thankful for clouds?
- At the beginning of the book, when everyone was thinking, “I wish that cloud would go away!” Sidney drifted to a new place, where, happily, Sidney found not just acceptance, but joyful welcome. What experiences of welcome came to your mind when you read this story?
- The end of the book tells readers that all Sidney ever wanted was to bring smiles to others. For Sidney, the challenge was to find that place. Is there a place where you bring smiles to others?

### ★ ★ EXPLORE THE STORY ★ ★

- On the second page of the book, we are told that “Everyone agreed it was a perfect day for a picnic.” As a family, explore and share your thoughts around the word “perfect.”
- *With Younger Children:* Notice the style of the illustrations and try your hand at creating cloud drawings together. Gather whatever art supplies you have available and create your own cloud picture. Consider adding a favorite quote from the story and hang your pictures near a window in your home.
- *With Older Children:* This story flipped a perspective that many of us have that cloudy weather can ruin a nice day. Try to flip a commonly held perspective that you have so that you can see things in a new way.

### PRAY

God who knows our wants and our needs, open our hearts to find the unexpected gifts that we experience each day. We thank you for the sun that makes things grow, the rain that feeds all living things, and the shade and breeze that offers relief. Amen.



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## ★ ★ DIG DEEPER ★ ★

This boldly and beautifully illustrated story is a simple reinforcement of the desire for welcome, inclusion, and purpose. Its themes of identity, acceptance, loneliness, and expectations are realities all children experience. Reading the story together provides an opportunity to engage with and explore these topics with children. The larger picture of environment and ecology are also hinted at, so listen for your children's wonderings, and consider exploring those themes more as well. Some ways to dig deeper include:

- Finding Sidney's experience in Scripture. Read the following biblical texts together and consider how this story relates to the message of these two passages: Matthew 10:14 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.
- Do an internet search of the parable of the Chinese farmer (or obtain a children's book version of the story such as *The Lost Horse: A Chinese Folktale*, by Ed Young and Tracey Adams). Compare Sidney's story to this parable, which questions what is good and what is not good. Seek out other examples in stories, movies, or real life that center on times when something can be considered both a good thing and a not so good thing depending on the situation.
- Learn about clouds! Do an internet search or visit your local library. Topics for further learning might include different types of clouds, the role of clouds in the water cycle, and how clouds develop and form. Older children may have already learned about clouds in school and may surprise you with their knowledge.
- Notice the animals in the illustrations. Encourage the children to make inferences as to where Sidney may have traveled to, and perhaps research parts of the world where these animals live in order to better appreciate how welcome Sidney's "tears" would have been.

## MORE TO READ & DO

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO LEARN MORE

### ADDITIONAL BOOKS ABOUT SADNESS, LONELINESS, & GRIEF

- [\*Grandpa's Window\*](#), by Laura Gehl and Udayana Lugo
- [\*My Elephant Is Blue\*](#), by Melinda Szymanik and Vasanti Unka
- [\*Arthur and the Forgetful Elephant\*](#), by Maria Girón
- [\*Binkle's Time to Fly\*](#), by Sharmila Collins and Carolina Rabei

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