

God notices you and thinks you are special!

Kids need that message, and *Wherever I Go* gives the message in a way that is fun for kids to look at, fun to hear, fun to recite and fun for engaging their whole bodies and getting their wiggles out.

There are many ways that parents and teachers can use *Wherever I Go* not only to plant seeds of assurance and faith in young hearts, but also to lay a foundation for essential skills in reading, thinking, writing, discussing and connecting with their families and communities.

Here are a few ways to extend this book's learning potential.

### **Reading & Reciting *Wherever I Go* Aloud**

Rhythm and rhyme make the poem easy for kids to memorize and recite. This provides pre-readers and beginning readers with an excellent reading activity because rhyme plays a key role in helping children become aware of sounds in words, while also teaching vocabulary and pronunciation and reinforcing the meaning of words.

You know when I sit  
You know when I stand  
You know every move I make  
You know what I'll say before I speak  
You know the paths I take  
You even know what I think about  
And if I'm asleep or awake....  
If I took the wings of the morning and flew  
To the farthest edge of the sea,  
Even there Your hand would be reaching out  
Holding and helping me

### **Reciting *Wherever I Go* with Motions**

I teach this poem to my class in children's church, so I know that kids really like it. They enjoy seeing the pictures and hearing the rhymes, but what they like best is reciting the poem with motions. Children who are familiar with the poem by reciting it with motions will be able to decipher the words of the poem more easily when they try reading it aloud.

Since kids learn even better when they can learn with their whole bodies, miming the words while reciting them multiplies the poem's value for understanding the meaning of words and for

absorbing reading skills. So, as the leader, you mime the activities and ideas in the poem, and the children mimic your actions. (These motions are only suggestions; you can come up with your own motions.)

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***Before starting this activity with a group of kids, explain The Making Space Rule:***

*Begin by having the children move away from each other and spread out their arms until they aren't touching each other. That's each child's space. Do the first action and then call "Space!" Everyone has to get back into their own space before the next action. After the kids get the idea, you only need to call "Space!" when you notice they are starting to move too close together.*

1 – You know everything about me, Lord! *(arms out wide)*

2-3 You know when I sit *(bend knees to sitting position)*

You know when I stand *(straighten and stand)*

4-5 You know every move I make *(make a crazy pose)*

You know what I'll say before I speak *(point to mouth)*

You know the paths I take *(move hand in zigzag motion)*

6-7 You even know what I think about *(point to forehead)*

And if I'm asleep *(both hands cover eyes)* or awake. *(pull hands sideways away from eyes)*

8-9 Above, *(point up)*

behind, *(point behind, over shoulder)*

before me...*(both hands outstretched, open palms)*

Everywhere I find Your hand!

You touch my life wherever I go...

*(pointer finger from one hand touches the palm of the other outstretched hand)*

10-11 If I wanted to run away from You, *(run in place)*

Where could I go? Up high? *(look upward with both hands reaching up)*

If I jumped to the skies, *(big jump)*

well, there You'd be

12-13 If I fell way down deep, *(crouch)*, it's You I'd see

Wherever I went you'd be there with me. (*stand and shrug shoulders*)

14-15 If I took the wings of the morning and flew (*flap arms in flying motion*)

To the farthest edge of the sea,

Even there Your hand would be reaching out (*reach out with one hand, open palm*)

Holding and helping me (*hug yourself*)

16-17 If I tried to hide in the darkest dark (*hands cover eyes*)

I couldn't escape Your sight

Hiding from You is impossible

Because wherever You are, there is light. (*pull hands sideways, uncovering eyes*)

18-19 Before I was born, (*hands over tummy, gradually moving outward through the stanza, stimulating a growing pregnant belly*)

when I was still growing inside my mother,

You watched how I was being made,

You formed me and knit me together. (*hands shaping an imaginary object and then pretending to knit*)

20-21 You even know how long I will live! (*one hand to the side, palm forward, while the pointer finger of the other hand touches each finger, as if counting something one by one*)

You know my life altogether.

22-23 Your thoughts are precious to me, O Lord! (*hug yourself*)

There's too many for me to count

(*hands in fists opening and closing to simulate lots of numbers*)

Your thoughts are amazing and marvelous

(*one hand above head, pointer finger raised, in swirling motion*)

And hard to figure out

24-25 I don't like when people talk bad about You (*hands on hips, frowning*)

When they mock You or curse Your name

I wish they would love You (*hands on heart*), respect You and thank You

I want them to be as amazed

as I am with You...every day! (*hands out*)

26-27 Search me, O God! Know all my mistakes

*(one hand is held sideways while the other hand makes turning motions)*

and keep me from turning the wrong way *(turning hand bumps straight into sideways hand)*

I want to stay on the pathway to You *(marching motions)*

And live with You always *(stop marching and face audience with arms out, palms up)*

### ***Teaching Wherever I Go with Discussion Questions***

Discussion benefits student learning in many ways. It clarifies their understanding of the text, and it not only helps them to understand new vocabulary, it helps them know how to use that vocabulary in context. Discussion catalyzes their ability to analyze and think critically, pushing them to explore, interpret, and reason. It helps kids connect the poem to their own experience, deepening their engagement with the ideas expressed. In group discussion, kids learn from each other's insights, experiences and knowledge. All of this helps increase kids' interest in reading.

Here is a list of questions to get you started. If the group is large, you should probably limit discussion to only one or two questions. You can always choose other questions for another time.

1. Where is your favorite place to go? Why do you like it there? Draw a picture of your favorite place and tell us about it.
2. What are 3 of your favorite things to do each school day?
3. What are 3 of your favorite things to do when you have vacation?
4. If you had wings, what would you do? Where would you fly? Draw a picture and tell a story or write a poem about it.
5. Where is your favorite hiding place? Why do you like it?
6. Ask your mom, dad, or caregiver to tell you the story of the day you were born (or, if adopted, the day they first saw you). What did they say?
7. Who is the oldest person in your family? Draw a picture of them and tell us what makes them special.
8. What is something God made that you think is amazing? Why do you think it is amazing?
9. How do you feel when you see something beautiful in nature? How do you think God made it?
10. Which part of the book do you like best? Why do you like that page so much?

11. What part of the book do you like the best? Draw a picture of yourself in that part of the book and write or tell about it.
12. What kinds of things scare you? Do you think God is with you when you feel scared? How can you tell?
13. Can you think of a time God helped you or someone you love? Tell the story.
14. If you could talk to God for one minute, what would you ask or say?
15. If God could give you a superpower, what would it be? How could you use it to help others?
16. How can we praise God? What are things we can do that would make God happy?
17. What is something kind you can do today for someone else? How do you think God feels about it?
18. What can we do when we make a mistake? How can God help us when that happens?
19. What are you thankful for today? Draw a picture and write a short prayer or thank-you message to God to go with your picture.

### **Teaching *Wherever I Go* with Writing Prompts**

All the discussion questions can be used to ask kids to write, *keeping in mind that many children write best if they are allowed to draw a picture first*, even in upper grade levels. While they are drawing, they are thinking about the details of the poem, strengthening their understanding. Other students may get the same benefits by jotting down lists of ideas before they write. *Either activity is pre-writing*, an essential first step most of us need to take before we can write in an easy flow of words.

Kids' prewriting drawings and idea lists give adults a window into their inner concepts. What notions are swirling around inside those lovable little heads? How deeply do they understand the ideas? Do they misunderstand what is being communicated? Their pre-writing and writing exercises can give you clues.

Writing also builds children's language skills, fosters reflection and creativity, provides a way for teachers to keep track of their growth over time, and strengthens fine motor skills. Hands-on tasks like writing also help shy or reluctant speakers to participate in thinking about the poem in ways that are satisfying and meaningful. Sharing their writings and drawings also provides, in turn, all the learning benefits listed as benefits of discussion.

### **Teaching *Wherever I Go* for special projects & programs**

Giving students opportunities to showcase their work for their families in special projects and programs benefits kids in many ways. Having opportunities to demonstrate their work helps students to understand and retain their knowledge and skills. It motivates them to take ownership for their learning. Participating in a group project promotes social skills like communication and teamwork with other students. Sharing their work with parents and relatives helps to boost children's self-esteem and to nurture their family relationships.

- Whether at home or in the classroom, children can practice reciting and acting out the poem until they are ready to perform it for a program or make a video to share.
- At home, families can make their own artistic family version of *Wherever I Go*, with children contributing their drawings for each line of the poem. Then kids can share their family version of the poem with grandparents, other relatives and family friends.
- Classes can make their own class version of *Wherever I Go* in the same way, with children contributing their drawings for each line of the poem. The class can then invite their families to come to a program displaying their work.
- An alternate project for home or school could be having parent photographers or videographers photograph or video children's work to show onscreen in a program. With the help of parent volunteers, a classroom can even put together and make individual copies of their own class version of the poem.

*I am glad to grant permission to families and classrooms to republish the poem, with attribution, in that format. I would especially appreciate it if parents gave me permission, in turn, to show their children's drawings on my website or social media. To request permission for private use – not commercial use – contact Becky Powers through her website:*

[www.beckypowers.com](http://www.beckypowers.com)

#### **BIO**

Becky Cerling Powers is a retired journalist and parenting columnist and the author or compiler of four books: *Forbidden Orphanage Outside the Forbidden City* (nonfiction novel); *Wherever I Go: Psalm 139 for Kids* (illustrated picture book); *Sticky Fingers, Sticky Minds* (story-based parenting insights); and *My Roots Go Back to Loving* (El Paso family stories). Becky loves to listen to people's stories and teach kids to write. As a teaching artist in local public schools, she taught poetry writing to K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade and special education students. She also developed the Family StoryPower Writing Workshop for children and family members, teaching kids to write through the sharing of family stories. You can find more about Becky at [www.beckypowers.com](http://www.beckypowers.com), <https://www.facebook.com/beckycerlingpowers> and [@beckycerlingpowers](https://www.instagram.com/beckycerlingpowers)