

1

Remember That You Are Dust

GENESIS 2:7; 3:19b; LUKE 12:16–21



GOAL

Children are introduced to the spiritual discipline of walking humbly by acknowledging their connection to nature as God's own creations and acknowledging the beautiful, fragile gift of earthly life.

- 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

Holy God, thank you for the reminder that you have lovingly created me from dust. Help me to ground myself in the beautiful, fragile gift of earthly life as I explore with your children this day. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Jesus' desire is for us to have life, and to have it abundantly (John 10:10), and we can do this by walking humbly with God. To walk humbly with God, we must first ground ourselves in our identity as God's beloved, dependent earth-creatures. We are made from dust, and we will return to dust. This session will explore how to incorporate that knowing into our daily lives as we practice walking humbly with God.

THE BIBLE STORY

This session's Bible story weaves together three passages: Genesis 2:7; 3:19b; Luke 12:16–21. In these stories, God creates humanity from dust, and God reminds God's people that we all will return to dust when we die. Throughout the Bible, we are offered reminders of this truth and how it should guide our actions. The session's passages end with one of these stories. In Luke 12:16–21, Jesus tells of a foolish rich man who has preoccupied himself with barns to store his riches instead of sharing them with those in need. In all three of these stories, God calls us to remember who we are and who we will become when we return to the earth.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children are deeply connected to nature. They often spend more time in it than adults do, through recess and playing outside! This session will build on children's natural connection to nature, grounding them in their identity as part of God's creation.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Take a Walk" (p. 8): Determine a place, indoors or outdoors (weather and location permitting), to take the children on a walk. Recruit adult helpers, if necessary.
- Depending on the options you choose:
- "Nature I Spy" (p. 10): Determine a place outdoors that you can gather the children where they can view nature (weather and location permitting) or gather pictures of various items of creation. Recruit adult helpers, if necessary.
- "Fingers in the Soil" (p. 10): Obtain paper cups, pebbles or small stones, potting soil, and vegetable or flower seeds. Prepare the paper cups by punching three holes in the bottom of each cup with a pencil or nail for drainage.



GETTING STARTED

☐ Play dough

PLAY DOUGH PLAY

C A

As the children enter, greet them by name. If possible, move your body to be on their level, especially if a child is new to you or this community. Tell the children any important information about your space—where they go for self-regulation (a quiet time), where the bathroom is, or anything else they might need to know.

Provide play dough and invite the children to sculpt something from God’s creation. Provide examples of animals, birds, fish, vegetation, landforms, and so forth. When everyone has had an opportunity to make something with the play dough, have the children share what they have created with one another. Comment on how amazing it is to see all the different things that can be made out of play dough.

WALK HUMBLY LITANY

AM

Teach the children the response to the question in the litany below. Take time to explain the meaning of unfamiliar words such as *require*, *fragile*, *dependent*, *creation*, or *grateful*. Then lead the litany by reading aloud the lines to the children, inviting them to follow your motions.

What does the Lord require of us? (*shrug shoulders and put hands out, palms up*)

To walk humbly with our God. (*walk in place*)

We, like all creation, are fragile (*wiggle fingers and move hands in a downward motion*), dependent (*grasp hands together*).

May we be grateful for each day we are given. (*tap right fingertips to lips and raise hand upward*)

Amen.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

☐ Adult helpers (optional)



Adjust the questions as needed to include children who are in a wheelchair, using words other than *walk* and *walking*, such as *move alongside*, *roll along*, or *rolling*.

TAKE A WALK

AM C X

Take the children on a walk where you have planned. Wonder together what they notice about their bodies as you proceed, or pause along the walk for a conversation. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- What parts of your body do you use to take a walk?
- What do you need to take a walk?
- How does taking a walk make your body feel?
- What do you feel with your body when you are walking?



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

REFLECTING AND CONNECTING

C

- Bible
- Resource Page 1

Tell the children that over the next four sessions you will be learning together about a different kind of walk, what it means to walk humbly with God. Wonder together about what the word *humble* means. It is likely a new word for these children. Comment that it means not thinking or acting like they are more important than others or God. Ask the children what it feels like to think about being part of the dust or dirt of the earth. Tell the children that, in today's Bible stories, they will learn that we all come from the earth, like all God's creation, and that we aren't in control, but God is.

Open the Bible to Genesis 2 and tell the children that the story they will hear is really two stories combined. Explain that the first part of the story is from the very beginning of the Bible where it tells about God creating the earth and all that is in it, including people. Then turn to Luke 12 and tell the children that the second story is found in the stories about Jesus. Explain that Jesus told a story about a rich man and all that he had that he thought he could keep forever. Comment that the rich man was not humble, forgetting that God was in charge, not himself.

Read aloud the adapted Bible story on Resource Page 1 based on Genesis 2:7; 3:19b; Luke 12:16–21. Then reflect on the story with the children. Use the questions below to help spur some conversation about the story. Avoid answering the open-ended questions for the children. Instead, encourage them to wonder by wondering with them.

- What part of the story did you like the best?
- What surprised you in this story?
- Why do you think God made people from dust and soil?
- How did God feel when God saw the rich man with his big harvest?
- What else could the rich man do with his big harvest besides storing it up?
- What was God's message to the rich man?
- How do you think the rich man felt when he got the message from God?
- We don't know what the rich man did after he got that message from God, but let's wonder about it together. What do you think the rich man did?
- If you were the rich man, what would you do?



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

C X

Tell the children that the celebrates different seasons, but that these are not seasons of nature like spring, summer, winter, and fall. Explain that the church seasons follow the life of Jesus and begin with the season of Advent, a time of waiting and preparing for the birth of Jesus. Ask the children what special day comes at the end of Advent (*Christmas*). Comment that there is another season called Lent, which is a time leading up to Easter Sunday. Tell the children that the first day of Lent, a time to remember what Jesus teaches us about God and God's love, is called Ash Wednesday.

Show the YouTube video “What Is the Meaning of Ash Wednesday?” (bit.ly/FMAshWednesday, 0:48). After the video, use the questions below to guide conversation with the children:

- ✦ When is Ash Wednesday?
- ✦ What do we do special on Ash Wednesday? (*Invite the children to demonstrate what happens; pantomime using a finger to dip in a bowl of ashes and make a cross on someone’s forehead.*)
- ✦ Why are ashes used?
- ✦ What does it mean to you to “remember you are dust”?
- ✦ What should we remember from Ash Wednesday throughout the year?

Reinforce that the ashes remind us that we are God’s creation from the soil.

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- Outdoor area or pictures of various items of creation
 - Adult helpers (optional)

NATURE I SPY

G NS

Take the children outdoors and gather in a space to view nature (weather and location permitting) or display pictures of various items of creation. Tell the children that they are going to play a game of I Spy. Invite the children to look around at the outdoor setting or move around to look at the pictures displayed. Begin the game by naming something you see, from which there are several items to choose, using a characteristic, such as a color or size or type. You might say that you spy something green or small or an animal or a flower. Then have the children take turns being the one to spy something. As each item is guessed, comment that it is a part of God’s creation. After the game, tell the children that we all are a part of God’s creation just like birds, the plants, the grass, the weeds, the clouds, and so forth.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Table covering
 - Prepared paper cups with holes in the bottom of the cups
 - Pebbles or small stones
 - Potting soil
 - Spoons
 - Small plastic plates
 - Vegetable or flower seeds
 - Spray bottle of water

FINGERS IN THE SOIL

NS X

Tell the children that one way we can remember that we are part of God’s creation is to get our hands in the dirt! Comment that walking humbly with God, or having a humble spirit with God, is remembering that it is God who made us, just like all of creation. Cover a table and provide prepared paper cups with holes punched in the bottom of them. Explain that the children will plant some seeds in the cups, take them home, and watch them grow. Use the following directions to guide the children in planting their seeds:

- Place a few pebbles or small stones in the bottom of the cup so the water can drain out and not be trapped in the cup.
- Fill the cup about three-quarters full with potting soil. (*Demonstrate how full the cup should be.*)
- Place several seeds on top of the soil and then gently push them down just a bit into the soil.

As the children feel the soil, remember together the Bible story about how God created us from the soil of the garden. Wonder together about what creation might have looked like and how people were described as being made from the soil. Then continue with the directions:

- Use the spray bottle and spray water on the soil to make the soil damp but not muddy.

- Place the cup on a small plastic plate to catch any water that might seep through.

After the seeds have been planted, wonder how the plants will grow and what they may look like. Draw some connections between the anticipation of growing seeds and the anticipation God might have watching us grow.

WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD

QC AM

Tell the children that you are going to lead them in a quiet meditation in which they can imagine they are walking or moving alongside God, or they can physically move in the room, slowly and carefully, so they don't move into other people's space. Invite children to find their place to imagine or to begin. Comment that, if they are using their imaginations and staying in one place, they can close their eyes during the meditation; if they are moving around the room, they need to keep their eyes open. Use Resource Page 2 to lead the guided meditation.

- Resource Page 2
- Copies of Resource Page 3

When you are finished with the meditation, gather the children and reflect together on the experience. Wonder what they liked about it. Ask them how either imagining or physically walking or moving alongside God could be done during their week. Suggest that, perhaps, when they are going somewhere, walking or riding, they could take a few moments to practice these five steps (*point to a thumb and each finger on one hand while you say them*): (1) take three deep breaths, (2) wiggle their toes or fingers in pretend dirt, (3) know they are with God and God is with them, (4) give thanks for something or someone, and (5) take three deep breaths again. Send home a copy of Resource Page 3 with each child so they can practice this meditation with their families.



FOLLOWING JESUS

GLAD SHARING

C

Gather the children together and celebrate the work that you have done together today by reviewing each of the activities you have chosen. Ask the children the following questions:

- Why is it important to remember that we are all dust?
- What can you do to remember to walk humbly with God?

To close your time together, introduce a reflection tool called GLAD. Invite the children to take turns sharing the following:

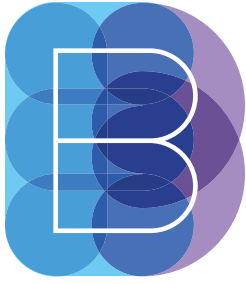
- Something they are GRATEFUL for
- Something they have LEARNED
- Something they ACCOMPLISHED
- Something that DELIGHTED them



The GLAD reflection closes each session of the unit. If all four reflections is a lot for the children, choose one or two for the children to use.

Close with this simple prayer, or one of your choosing:

Dear God, thank you for creating me from the dust. Help me to remember that you made me, just like you made the earth. Amen.



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON GENESIS 2:7; 3:19b; LUKE 12:16–21

In the very beginning of the Bible, there are stories about the beginnings of God’s people. In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, we hear about the creation of the world and all that is in it: light and dark, sky and waters, land and sea, birds and fish, plants and animals, and people too. God’s people who told these stories say that people were made by God in a very special way. God scooped up some of the dust and dark, rich soil from the ground and made something out of the soil, something person-shaped. Then God breathed into the dirt-person, and the dirt person became a living, breathing human person. A few different times in the Bible, God reminds us people that we came from the dirt and the dust, and when we die, we will turn back into the same dust and dirt.

Many, many years later, Jesus tells a story about a man who was very rich. The rich man owned lots of land, and one year so many plants grew on his land that he had a *huge* harvest. His harvest was so big that he didn’t have a big enough place to store all the grain collected from his land. So he decided he would tear down his barns and storage buildings to make bigger ones to keep all his crops to himself. Since his harvest was so big and he kept it to himself, he could just not work anymore. Instead, he could just play and have a good time.

God didn’t like that plan very much. He told the rich man, “You have saved all this grain for yourself, but what will happen to all the extra that you don’t need? You are not in control or more important than others. You may die tonight. If you save everything for yourself, it will go to waste. There are other people who need what you have kept all to yourself.”

Walk Humbly with God

Guided Meditation

Use the following directions to lead the children in a guided meditation.

Wherever you are, take a deep breath in (*pause*) and then let it out.

In your imagination or physically, move forward and pause. Take another deep breath in (*pause*) and then let it out.

And do that one more time. Move forward, pause, and take in a deep breath (*pause*) and let it out.

Now, imagine your feet are on the ground, in soft soil. If you can, wiggle your toes or wiggle your fingers in the dirt. You are connected to the earth.

Silently, give thanks to God for God's good creation, this earth, this dirt, and you.

In your imagination or physically, slowly move forward. You are walking or moving alongside God.

Yes! God is with you, and you are with God. Right now, right here.

You are feeling happy and loved.

You are walking humbly with God.

As you are moving forward, give thanks to God with each step or movement:

- Give thanks to God for being with you right now and right here. (*pause*)
- Give thanks to God for something good that happened to you today or this week. (*pause*)
- Give thanks to God for someone you love. (*pause*)
- Give thanks to God for someone who loves you. (*pause*)
- Give thanks to God for you. (*pause*)

Stop moving and take a deep breath in (*pause*) and then let it out.

Tell God you will do this again soon.

Take another deep breath in (*pause*) and then let it out.

And one more time, take a deep breath in (*pause*) and then let it out.

Open your eyes if they were closed, and let's gather together.



Take three deep breaths.



Wiggle your toes or
fingers in pretend dirt.



Know you are with God
and God is with you.



Give thanks for
something or someone.



Take three deep breaths.

