

Remember You Are Dust

GENESIS 2:7; 3:19

1



GOAL

Youth explore ways that creation, the earth and its creatures, is connected and interdependent; they are called to live in humble relationship with these.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God of all creation, my life bears your fingerprints and is held in your love. From dust I came and to dust I will go. Help me remember my connection to creation. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Human beings consider ourselves the crowning glory of God’s creation, exalted above everything else God made. Scripture tells us that, when God created humanity, God fashioned us out of “the dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7a). We are intimately connected with the earth and everything on it. To walk humbly acknowledges the beautiful, fragile gift of earthly life. We are utterly dependent on earthly things—air, water, food, shelter—to sustain our lives. This knowledge has ecological implications as we claim our response and responsibility to care for and protect our shared earth.

THE BIBLE STORY

Genesis 2 tells us that God formed humans from the dust of the ground. In a Hebrew play on words, the human (*adam*) is created out of the ground (*adamah*). We are made from the stuff of the earth. In English, we can make our own play on words; the root of the word *humble* is *humus*, soil or dirt. To walk humbly is to stay grounded, to live like the earthlings we are. In Genesis 3:19, God reminds us that, like the rest of creation, we will one day die and return to the dust from which we came.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

In adolescence, youth begin to see themselves as connected to others and leave behind the self-centeredness of childhood. Yet they also struggle to find their place in a world that often insists on hierarchy. Reminding youth that they are made of the same stuff as the animals, the trees, the dirt itself, is a humbling practice that points out how they are connected to all things on earth. It reminds them that God calls them and all things good.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Created” (p. 6): Obtain a small container of play dough for each participant.
- Depending on the options you choose:
- “Playing in the Sand” (p. 7): Fill tray with play sand. Moisten sand with water until it can be molded.
- “Dust to Dust” (p. 7): Gather supplies listed in the activity. Stir dirt and water to a consistency of tempera paint.
- “Micah 6:8” (p. 7): Obtain the *Walk Humbly* infographic poster ([bit.ly /FMInfographicPosters](https://bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters), Year 3 Set).
- “Loving Kindness—Feeding Bees and Butterflies” (p. 8): Obtain pollinator-friendly seeds and gardening tools.
- “Doing Justice—Cleanup Day” (p. 9): Obtain trash bags and gloves.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Individual containers of play dough

CREATED

A AT C

Give each participant a container of play dough. Invite them to create something from the play dough that tells about themselves, such as a hobby, talent, or interest. Encourage them to play with the dough, rolling it into balls or strings or squeezing it between their fingers, as they think about what they will create.

Invite them to show their creations and what it tells about them. Explain that, in this session, they will explore Scripture that tells about God molding the first earth creature (Adam) from the dirt. Playing with the play dough helps us consider how we are both creators and created by God's hands.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1

WALK HUMBLY LITANY

QC

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 and invite youth to read responsively the litany for session 1. Then read aloud this prayer or one like it:

God, you made each of us from the dust. With your fingers, you made us to be a loving part of your creation. Help us recognize how we can walk humbly with the earth. Amen.

Collect copies of Resource Page 1 to use for sessions 2, 3, and 4.



Teaching Tip: Make sure you have parents' and the church's permission to take the youth off the church property.

NATURE WALK

AM CT C

Lead participants on a short walk in an area near the church where they can interact with nature. During the walk, have youth look for plants and animals and other natural elements. Wonder together:

- ➔ Why are there bugs here?
- ➔ What helps the flowers and grass grow? How do the plants help us?
- ➔ What do you notice when you take time to look closely at nature?
- ➔ What natural thing did you see that you liked most? Why?

Return to your learning space to continue the session.

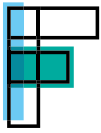
- ☐ Internet-connected device

WITH THE DUST

AT T

Use an internet-connected device to access the poem "Blessing the Dust" by Jan Richardson on her website, *The Painted Prayerbook* (bit.ly/FMRichardson). If youth have smartphones, they may access the poem and follow along.

Read the poem aloud as youth listen. Explain that this poem was written for Ash Wednesday, a day when Christians across the world remember that they are made from dust and will become dust again when they die. Sometimes this message can make you feel small and insignificant, which can be difficult with so many other things that can make you feel small. It also is a reminder that God saw potential in the dust and saw a purpose in you in creation, even if you return to dust in 100 years. Ask the youth how it feels to think about the dust in this way.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

PLAYING IN THE SAND

A AM AT X

Gather the youth around the box of sand and have them feel the sand. Invite them to make a model of a face in the sand. Ask what they consider in how they create the face. What feeling or expression are they creating on the face? How do the eyes and mouth show these? They may use paper towels to wipe their hands.

Have a volunteer read Genesis 2:4–15. Ask the youth to tell you how God created humans in this story. Distribute copies of Resource Page 2. Explain that the writing shows Genesis 2:7 in English [1] and in the original Hebrew [2]. Have them look at the words in outline instead of black text. This is what God called the first *human creature*, whom we name Adam. Then look at the words in dotted instead of black text. This is the word for *earth* or *ground*. In Hebrew, the words are almost the same [3], pronounced *ah-dam'* and *ah-dam-ah'*. It was a playful way for the author to remind the reader that the man is made of the same stuff as the earth.

Ask the youth to think about what God wanted Adam to do. Refer them to verse 15. Explain that the earth needs us to tend to it as much as we need the earth to provide for us.

- Large container with dampened play sand
- Paper towels
- Bibles
- Copies of Resource Page 2

DUST TO DUST

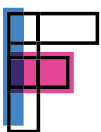
A CT

Give each youth a sheet of paper and a paintbrush. Invite them to use the mud mixture to paint a picture of themselves in nature. Encourage them to paint animals or trees around them. As they paint, read Genesis 2:4–15.

Ask what God used to make humans in the story. Point out that they just created a picture from dirt mixed with water. Ask them to predict what will happen when the picture dries. Explain that, when dry, the mud will begin to flake off and the picture will not last. The flakes may crumble into dust.

Read Genesis 3:19. Remind youth that humans live on earth for only a little while, about 80 to 100 years. While we are on earth, we can care for the earth from which we were made and to which we return.

- Bibles
- Dirt and water mixed to make a thick, muddy liquid
- Paper
- Paintbrushes
- Supplies for cleanup



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

MICAH 6:8

Display the *Walk Humbly* infographic poster. Have a volunteer read aloud Micah 6:8 while youth follow along. Point out that the three ways of living named in this verse are displayed on the poster. Discuss how these ways of living intersect with one another. Continue to display the poster throughout this practice.

- Bibles
- Walk Humbly* infographic poster
- Internet-connected device

Explain that each session of *Walk Humbly* will offer opportunities to engage in these three ways of responding to God: walk humbly, love kindness, and do justice. Show the YouTube video “What Does the Lord Require of You” (bit.ly/FMRequire, 4:20).

Internet-connected device

ROMAN FARMING

T CT

Use an internet-connected device to display “Crop Rotation–History and Principles of Crop Rotation” (bit.ly/FMCropRotation).

Explain that, since before history was recorded, farmers have known that planting the same crops in the same fields every year can deplete nutrients from the soil and make it difficult to grow anything there. Ancient Romans used a practice called *crop rotation* to help keep the soil healthy and increase their crop yield.

Read the section “The Romans.” Discuss the concept of a fallow field. Explain that when a field is fallow, nothing is planted there and animals are allowed to graze in the field. This period of rest prepares the field to be productive the next year.

Explain that this is one way that ancient farmers knew the importance of caring for the land so that the land could care for them. If interest and time allow, assign other sections from the webpage to volunteers to read and report on crop rotation.

Internet-connected device

OCEAN CLEANUP

AT C T

Introduce a YouTube video that features 18-year-old Boyan Slat. Boyan tackles global issues of sustainability by combining environmentalism, entrepreneurialism, and technology. He describes a diving trip to Greece where he comes across more plastic bags than fish. Boyan wondered how can this be cleaned up.

Show the YouTube video “How the Oceans Can Clean Themselves: Boyan Slat at TEDxDelft:” (bit.ly/FMOceanCleaning, 11:21). Use these questions for discussion:

- ➔ What drove Boyan to work on this project?
- ➔ What problems were caused by the plastic in the water?
- ➔ Why was Boyan worried about the plankton?
- ➔ How does Boyan’s device help care for the oceans?
- ➔ How do the oceans help care for us?

You can read about what has happened with this project since 2012 here: bit.ly/FMRevisitOceanCleanUp.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Pollinator-friendly native plant seeds
 Shovels
 Water source

LOVING KINDNESS—FEEDING BEES AND BUTTERFLIES

AM S X

Before the session, check with your congregation’s leadership about planting a pollinator garden on your property. Consult “Pollinator-Friendly Native Plant Lists” (bit.ly/FMPlantLists) to discover plants native to your area. Acquire seeds.

Explain that one of the ways we walk humbly is by recognizing where we can love kindness and do justice. This week, we are exploring acts of

ecological justice, which involves recognizing how humans, other living things, and natural systems are all related and depend on each other.

Explain that some insects help pollinate the plants that we need to eat. As pollinators, like bees and butterflies, struggle to find food because their food sources have been destroyed by humans, other plants we need are not being pollinated. When we plant the plants that pollinators use as food, they help us have the food we need to grow.

Plant a small pollinator garden in an area on your church grounds. Assist youth in identifying tasks to maintain the garden. Encourage volunteers to take on the tasks as necessary.

DOING JUSTICE—CLEANUP DAY

AM S CT

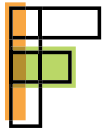
If time allows, take a walk around the church neighborhood. Collect trash to be recycled or thrown away. Ask how trash pickup affects a person's humility.

Discuss the impact on the streets and the environment when there are efforts for regular trash pickup versus one-time cleanup days. Assist youth in identifying ways that they can participate in regular trash collection or recycling.

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- Gloves
 - Trash bags



Teaching Tip: Make sure you have parents' or caregivers' and the church's permission to take the youth off the church property.



FOLLOWING JESUS

COMMITTING TO THE PRACTICE

C QC

Remind the youth that we are interconnected with the earth and all the creatures on it. Scripture tells us that we are made from the dust of the earth and we will return to the dust. While we are living, we are called to walk humbly with creation by caring for the earth as it cares for us. Encourage the youth to find ways to care for the environment in the coming week.

Lead the youth in the following prayer:

God who created us from the dust, breathe on us. Enliven us to walk humbly with your creation so that our world becomes a garden of joy and love for all things. Amen.

Walk Humbly Litany



Session 1

What does the Lord require of us?

To walk humbly with our God.

We, like all creation, are fragile and dependent.

May we be grateful for each day we are given.

Session 2

What does the Lord require of us?

To walk humbly with our God.

Rather than wanting only for ourselves,
may we remember and protect those in need.

Session 3

What does the Lord require of us?

To walk humbly with our God.

Rather than judging others for being different,
may we thank God for the gifts they bring.

Session 4

What does the Lord require of us?

To walk humbly with our God.

Rather than telling others how humble we are,
may we listen and learn from others and God.

Collect the Resource Page to use in sessions 1–4.

Genesis 2:7

[1] Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

[2] וַיִּצְרֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם
עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו
נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְגַפְשׁ חַיָּה:

[3] הָאָדָם
הָאֲדָמָה

