



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

Session 1

- Did you know that there is more than one creation account in the Bible? Can you name or summarize the creation accounts?
- How important is it to you that the different creation accounts match up?
- How do you think we should respond to God's gift of creation? Why?

Session 2

- What do you think of when you hear the phrase "Old Testament God"?
- Do you think the stereotype of the Old Testament God is accurate? Why or why not?
- If you had lived in Old Testament times, how would you have approached God? Would you have trusted God? Why or why not?
- If you had lived in Old Testament times, could God have trusted you?

Session 3

- Have you ever tried to read the whole Bible from start to finish? If you didn't succeed, why not?
- Do you find certain parts of the Bible boring? What parts?
- Do you think those boring parts should be in the Bible? Why or why not?

Session 4

- Can you recall any stories from Judges off the top of your head? List them.
- Many of the stories in Judges are graphic in their violence and brutality. What's the point of having such stories in the Bible?
- The writer of Judges blames much of the people's violence on the lack of a king over Israel. What other reasons can you think of for people to behave badly?

Session 5

- In two versions of the same story in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, King David gets in trouble with God for taking a census of the people. What do you think could have been wrong with that?
- In one version of the story, it is God who tells David to take the census—then God punishes David for doing so. What do you make of this?
- In the other version of the story, which was written later, it is Satan who prods David to count the people. Does it bother you that the writer of this version changed the original in such a major way? Why or why not?

Session 6

- Why should Christians pay attention to the Old Testament? (Or should they?)
- Do you value the New Testament over the Old? (Or vice versa?) If so, why?
- Have you ever witnessed or experienced Jewish worship? If so, describe what it was like.



COMPARING THE CREATION ACCOUNTS

Genesis 1:1—2:4a

Psalms 8

Genesis 2:4b–24

Proverbs 8:22–31

List the order in which the following things were created (if applicable): birds, other animals, female human beings, light, male human beings, the moon, plants, the sun, water, wisdom.

What does God's attitude toward creation seem to be?

How are human beings meant to act toward God and the rest of creation?

What surprises you about this passage? (What did you not expect to see? What did you expect to find but didn't?)

"In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community."

—A Brief Statement of Faith (10.3)

In what ways does this faith statement reflect or not reflect the Scripture passage, as you understand it?

If you had to boil this passage down to its most important point, what would it be?



GOD SPEAKING THROUGH THE PROPHET HOSEA ...

"When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
But the more they were called,
the more they went away from me.
They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.

It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.
To them I was like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.

Will they not return to Egypt
and will not Assyria rule over them
because they refuse to repent?

Swords will flash in their cities,
will destroy the bars of their gates
and put an end to their plans.
My people are determined to turn from me.
Even though they call me God Most High,
I will by no means exalt them.

How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I treat you like Admah?
How can I make you like Zeboyim?
My heart is changed within me;
all my compassion is aroused.
I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.
For I am God, and not a human being —
the Holy One among you.
I will not come against their cities."

—Hosea 11:1–9 (TNIV)



FUN TIMES WITH BORING PASSAGES

Genesis 5:1–8, 21–32

Psalms 119:1–16, 105–112

Leviticus 11:1–8, 29–38, 41–45

Ezekiel 40:1–16; 42:15–20

What makes this passage boring?

What seems to be the purpose(s) of this passage?

Can you locate one or more verses in the passage that state why the writer has written it? If you can, which verse(s) did you locate?

Can you imagine being in a situation in which this Scripture passage would be important and interesting to you? Why or why not?

The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless words of human beings, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding.

—*Confession of 1967* (9.29),
Inclusive Language Text

How does this faith statement suggest that we handle such biblical passages?



SESSION 4 FAITH STATEMENT

In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God's condemnation. Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.

—*A Brief Statement of Faith* (10.3)





COUNT THE WAYS



Use all of the props in this bag and your imagination to create and act out a skit that tells the story of David's census as it appears in 2 Samuel 24:1–17.



Use all of the props in this bag and your imagination to create and act out a skit that tells the story of David's census as it appears in 1 Chronicles 21:1–17.



Use all of the props in this bag and your imagination to create a skit that tells the “backstory” of David's census as it appears in 2 Samuel 24:1–17 and 1 Chronicles 21:1–17. Begin with a dialogue between God and Satan: Do they argue about whether to make David take a census of the people? Do they plot together because they think it will be fun to make David squirm? Does God try to stop Satan from inciting David to sin?





ISAIAH AND JESUS

Part A

Using a Bible dictionary and/or commentaries, work together to research answers to the questions below. Be prepared to share your group's findings with the rest of the participants.

In Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6, who is the speaker (the "me" or "I" in the verses)?

Who is the speaker proclaiming "good news" to, and what does this "good news" mean?

In Luke 4:18–19, what does Luke understand these words to mean?

In what ways are Isaiah's and Luke's interpretations of these words alike and different?

Notes:

Part B

Use the questions below to guide your group's discussion of Luke 4:14–21. Be prepared to share your group's answers with the rest of the participants.

What do we learn about Jesus in the introductory verses (vv. 14–16a)?

Why do you think Jesus chose the particular piece of Scripture that he reads in Luke 4:18–19?

Read Jesus' words in Luke 4:21. What does he mean? How would you feel if you'd been worshiping in that synagogue when Jesus said those words?

Why do you think it matters that Jesus chose to begin his ministry by saying that Scripture (our Old Testament) had been fulfilled with his coming? Couldn't he have ignored the old prophecies and done his own thing?

If Isaiah's prophecy has indeed been fulfilled, does that mean that there are no more poor, captive, blind, or oppressed people in the world? If not, what does this reality suggest that our role is as part of the body of Christ?

Notes:



SESSION 6 FAITH STATEMENT

The Old Testament bears witness to God's faithfulness in God's covenant with Israel and points the way to the fulfillment of God's purpose in Christ. The Old Testament is indispensable to understanding the New, and is not itself fully understood without the New.

—*Confession of 1967* (9.28)

