

1

See Differences and Similarities

GENESIS 1:1–27



GOAL

Children explore different ways God created the world and humanity full of diversity.

- 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

Creative God, help me to show the children I lead that there are so many ways to know you. May we celebrate the diversity you have created in the world around us and within each one of us. Amen.

THIS SESSION

The Bible uses images, similes, and metaphors to talk about God and our experience of God. God is more expansive than our language can ever describe and cannot be bound by our language. When we use limiting pronouns for God (he, him, his), we restrict who God is, and we reduce our understanding of God’s creative expression in the world, including we who are made in the image of God. Each person, with all their complexities, expressions, and identities, is a reflection of the creative nature of the divine. This session celebrates the diversity that is reflected in this world and in humankind.

THE BIBLE STORY

In the midst of a creation story (Genesis 1:1–27) that describes the vast diversity of the universe and the earth we live upon, we hear that God created all human beings in the image of God. Just as we know that dry land and water are not the only ways the world conveys land and sea, or night and day are the not only ways we experience the rhythm of the sun, we can look around at the diversity of humanity and see that we are truly a reflection of the fullness of God’s creativity.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children tend to be more comfortable with diversity than many adults. They see diversity in the world around them from sunny days and rainy days, different flowers in a garden, pets in their neighborhood, and even in the makeup of their family. They begin to understand similarities and differences as a matter of fact and have not yet placed value judgments on these. It is important that the trusted adults in their lives help them to honor and celebrate the differences in the world and in people.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “God Made Everything” (p. 9): Obtain the *Honor God’s Diversity* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “A Place for All” (p. 9): Obtain *Neither* by Airlie Anderson (Little, Brown and Company, 2018) or use the YouTube video “Neither by Airlie Anderson” (bit.ly/FMNeither, 3:27).
- “God’s Diverse World” (p. 10): Recruit extra helpers if weather and location permit an outside walk to observe nature.
- “Pronouns” (p. 10): Obtain *They, She, He Easy as ABC* by Maya Christina Gonzalez and Matthew SG (Reflection Press, 2020) or use the YouTube video “They, She, He—Easy as ABC” (bit.ly/FMThey, 5:49).



GETTING STARTED

- Mural paper
- Crayons
- Mirrors

CHILDREN OF GOD

A C

Display mural paper on a wall, table, or floor. Greet children as they arrive and draw an outline of each child on the mural paper. Invite them to color a picture of themselves: the clothing they are wearing, their hair, and their facial features. Provide mirrors so children may look at their faces and see their eye color.

After the children have finished coloring, ask questions wondering who else is the same age or has characteristics like that child, such as eye color or hair color. Celebrate each similarity and each difference. Title the mural “We Are All Children of God!” Comment that God made each one with some things the same (name a few) and some things different (name a few), and that’s just the way God wanted it. Save the mural for “I Am Me!” (p. 11).

CELEBRATING GOD’S DIVERSITY

C

Invite the children to respond with suggestions as prompted, highlighting God’s diversity in creation and in us. Let the group know when they will respond individually and as a group. Use the following pattern:

God made (*name an item of creation, such as the moon or mountains, or a particular body of water or land form, or a particular plant or animal*).

Let’s describe (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*Invite people to take turns describing the item of creation named above.*)

Thank you, God, for (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*One person at a time, lead this part of the litany.*)

(*Name*), you are made in God’s image.

(*Invite the named person to say a sentence that describes something about themselves, such as “I am tall,” or “I have green eyes,” or “I like to draw.”*)

Thank you, God, for (*name of person named above*).



Example:

God made the sun.

Let’s describe the sun.

It’s big. It’s hot. It makes me sweaty.

Thank you, God, for the sun.

Rosie, you are made in God’s image.

I have curly hair.

Thank you, God, for Rosie.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Cards cut from Resource Pages 1 and 2

MATCHING GAME

G C

Show the children the cards cut from Resource Pages 1 and 2 and wonder together what they are depicting. Note that the two mountains make a match, but they are different mountains, just like the two children reading a book make a match even though they are different children who like to read. Tell the children that each card has a match, even though they are different too. Comment that the cards show the diversity of creation. Introduce the word *diversity* and have the children repeat it after you. Explain that it means a variety or many different ways.

Have the children play a matching game. Mix up the cards and turn them face down on a table or floor. Have the children take turns to find a matching set of cards.

Once all of the matches have been found, distribute a set of matched cards to each child. Some children may have more than one set or a pair of children may share a set. Invite each child, or pair, to describe what their pictures are. Note that the children are not all the same. They look different and like to do different things. Comment that we, too, all look different even though we are all people. Wonder who in your group likes to do the activities shown in the pictures (play soccer, cook, read, play as a builder, play in sand, and look at maps). Comment that God made each of us with variety and diversity!



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

GOD MADE EVERYTHING

A QC

Provide paper and crayons. Invite the children to draw pictures of some of the things they hear as you read the adapted Bible story from Genesis 1:1–27 from Resource Page 3. After the reading, have the children share their pictures of things they heard in the story. Wonder what it means that God created “even more” than what is mentioned in the story.

Draw the children’s attention to the *Honor God’s Diversity* infographic poster and continue talking together about “even more.” Invite the children to take turns pointing out the many pictures of diversity found in the poster.

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- Resource Page 3
 - Paper and crayons
 - Honor God’s Diversity* infographic poster



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

A PLACE FOR ALL

C

Read aloud *Neither* by Airlie Anderson or show the YouTube video “Neither by Airlie Anderson” (bit.ly/FMNeither, 3:27). Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ✦ At the beginning of the book, who are the characters?
- ✦ How are they similar and different?
- ✦ How do you think they feel about differences?
- ✦ How do they treat Neither?
- ✦ What kinds of characters live in the Land of All?
- ✦ What do they look like? What do you think they can do?
- ✦ What kind of place do you think God wants the world to be?
- ✦ Why do you think God wants a Land of All?

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- Neither* by Airlie Anderson (Little, Brown and Company, 2018) or internet-connected device

- Extra helpers (optional)
- Paper
- Crayons
- Mural paper, scissors, glue (optional)

GOD'S DIVERSE WORLD

NS A

If weather and location permit an outdoor walk to observe nature, have the children form small groups with an adult or youth helper with each group. Invite the groups to go outdoors and walk around for a specified period of time. Tell the children to take a picture in their mind of something they see that is a part of God's creation, such as a flower, plant, tree, animal, or insect so that they can draw a picture of it when they return to the room.

Provide paper, crayons, scissors, and glue and have the children draw a picture of something they saw, cut it out, and glue it to a piece of mural paper. Invite the children to tell about their drawings. Title the mural "God's Diverse World." Notice how everyone created different pictures using different colors, just like God created everything full of diversity and variety.

If weather or location do not permit an outdoor walk, give the children paper and crayons. Have them fold the paper in half and in half again, opening it up to have four spaces. Invite the children to draw a flower in one space. Have them hold up their pictures and ask if they all look the same. Have the children draw a bird, a fish, and a person they love in each of the other spaces. After each drawing, ask if they all look the same. Comment on similarities and differences. Suggest that all the flowers are flowers, and all the birds are birds, and all the fish are fish, and all the people are people they love, and they all have things the same, but they are all different. Tell the children that God made the world full of diversity—differences—and called it good!



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- They, She, He Easy as ABC* by Maya Christina Gonzalez and Matthew SG (Reflection Press, 2020) or internet-connected device

PRONOUNS

C AM

Tell the children that people are part of God's diverse world; the different ways people know themselves and let us know who they are honors God's creative diversity. Explain that pronouns are short words that people use when referring to other people when they don't use their name. Give some examples:

- Manuel isn't here yet. I wonder when *he* will arrive.
- Penny is walking *her* dog.
- Sami is sure *they* will like *their* new school.

Tell the children that some people use *they*, *them*, and *theirs* when they feel like they are both *he* and *she* or neither *he* nor *she*. Some people have discovered another word to use, *ze*, and some people have chosen their own pronoun such as *tree*. Comment that this may seem kind of confusing at times, but the best way to use pronouns is to ask a person what their pronouns are.

Read aloud *They, She, He Easy as ABC* by Maya Christina Gonzalez and Matthew SG or show the YouTube video "They, She, He—Easy as ABC" (bit.ly/FMThey, 5:49) for a fun way to encounter pronouns and dance moves. Pause after some letters and invite the children to move or dance like the person in the picture. Celebrate God's diversity in people.



For your own reference about respectful language that builds God's beloved community, download the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s brochure "Well Chosen Words" at bit.ly/FMWellChosenWords. It contains helpful information about inclusive language for people and expansive language for God.

I AM ME!

A C

Remind the children that we are all God’s children with similarities and differences. Comment that we all have characteristics and abilities that make us special. Cut apart the children’s pictures from the mural paper (large rectangles, not the outlined pictures) and give them the following prompts to add around their pictures:

- Your favorite color
- A food you like
- A game or activity you like
- Your family members and pets

As the children are coloring, write on each child’s paper, “I Am a Child of God!” Invite the children to share what they have added to their pictures. Celebrate all that is special to each child. Encourage the children to take their pictures home and display them in a place they can see them each day to remind them that they are God’s special and unique creation.

- Mural from “Children of God” (p. 8)
- Coloring or drawing materials



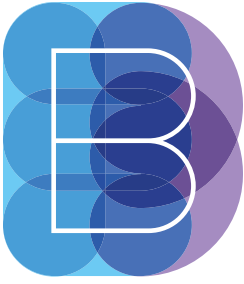
FOLLOWING JESUS

Gather the children in a circle. Invite them to repeat after you as you pray:

God made me, /
She, he, ze, tree, or whatever will be. /
I am me! /
(Invite each child to say something special about themselves.)
Thank you, God, /
for making each of us /
exactly who you mean us to be. /
Amen. /







BIBLE STORY

ADAPTED FROM GENESIS 1:1–27

Long, long, long ago, before there was anything, there was nothing. Nothing but God and a whole lot of darkness. Into this darkness, God breathed, and a wind swirled. God said, “Let there be light.” And, there was light! Light and dark, day and night, and even more! God liked this.

So God took another deep breath and said, “Let there be sky that is separate from the waters.” And there was sky and waters. Imagine all the kinds of waters that formed upon the earth: oceans, rivers, lakes, ponds, and even more! God liked this.

God breathed again and said, “Let dry land appear among the waters.” And there was dry land. Imagine all the land that appeared: flat, tall, hilly, rocky, sandy, and even more! God said that things should grow on the lands and in the waters. Imagine what grows: daisies and daffodils, redwoods and willows, apples and carrots, and even more! God liked this.

Then God said there should be lights in the sky to light up the day and night. Imagine all these lights: sun, moon, stars, and even more! God liked this.

Into the waters and land and sky, God breathed and spoke, saying, “Let there be living creatures in the waters and in the air.” Imagine the sea creatures and those that fly in the air, and even more! God liked this.

So God said, “Let there be creatures on the land too.” Imagine creeping things and wild things; big, small, furry, and scaled creatures, and even more! God liked this.

And then God took a deep breath and said, “Let us make humankind in our image.” God breathed life into them, creativity and kindness, intelligence and curiosity, and even more. Imagine human beings of all shapes, colors, sizes, and even more! God liked this so very, very much.

