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Appreciate God's Creation

GENESIS 1:1-5, 14-19; ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8



GOAL

By hearing the story of creation, the children begin to notice beauty in the simplest parts of nature and connect that beauty with God the creator.

- 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

Creator of all, may this gathering be a time to appreciate your beautiful creation as we seek to learn how we can care for and tend the world you have entrusted to us. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Care for creation starts at the beginning with the first verses of Genesis 1 with the creation story and our place in God's creation, as both the created and stewards of God's good gifts to us. Before we can take on that role of stewards of creation, we can pause to appreciate all that God has created.

THE BIBLE STORY

Each of the four sessions in this unit will focus on selected verses from Genesis 1 paired with a second biblical text. With the backdrop of the story of creation, we explore how we, as people of faith, can care for and appreciate the different parts of God's creation. Each session's adapted Bible story begins and ends in the same way, hearing God's declaration that the creation is good and that God has not yet finished this creation. This session explores God's creation of light, dark, time, and seasons.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

The curiosity that comes naturally to young children gives them perhaps a better appreciation of the world God created than adults might have. Exploring the creation story, however, can be difficult for children who are literal, concrete thinkers. Leaders should remember that it is not necessary to explain the complexities of how the world came to be, but allow it to be the poetic story that it is from a faithful people ascribing the power and beauty of speaking a world into being. As faith-formation leaders of young children, we need only set down the first layer of this story, knowing that they will explore it again and again as they grow and mature in their faith.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Starting Seeds" (p. 8): Obtain small containers or pots with a hole for drainage; small pebbles; seed-starting soil; a variety of fast-growing flower seeds such as marigolds, snapdragons, zinnias, or petunias; and vegetable seeds such as lettuce, spinach, beans, or carrots. Cover a table with newspaper or plastic tablecloth. Set out supplies for planting seeds. Recruit a helper.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Daily Prayer of Thanks" (p. 10): Cut out two suns and two moons for each child from card-stock copies of Resource Page 4. Obtain a hanger for each child.
- "I Spy" (p. 11): Determine a place you can meet outdoors, weather and location permitting. Otherwise, find an indoor spot where you can see outside, perhaps a large window or doorway. Recruit adult helpers, if necessary.



GETTING STARTED

- Newspaper or plastic tablecloth
- Helper
- Small containers or pots with a hole for drainage
- Permanent marker
- Small pebbles
- Seed-starting soil
- Spoons
- Variety of fast-growing flower seeds such as marigolds, snapdragons, zinnias, or petunias; and vegetable seeds such as lettuce, spinach, beans, or carrots
- Spray bottle with water
- Tray(s)
- Plastic bag(s) or plastic wrap



As the children explore God's creation in this unit, they will plant and tend seeds, watching them grow over the span of the sessions.



Make several extra seed pots for children who are not present today and may attend future sessions of this unit.

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- Internet-connected device

STARTING SEEDS

NS X

Greet the children as they arrive and invite them to go to the table where you have set up the seed-planting station. Show the children the seed packets and describe the seeds you have chosen. Tell them that they will choose a flower or vegetable to plant today and then tend it over the next three sessions. Assure the children that if they aren't present at one of these sessions, someone will care for their plant in their absence! Have the children choose a container or pot and write their name on it with the marker. Assist with writing as needed. Invite the children to choose the flower or vegetable they would like to plant. Write what type of seed each child chooses on their container or pot as well. Use the following directions to guide the children in planting their seeds, enlisting the aid of a helper:

- Place two or three pebbles at the bottom of the pot over the hole.
- Use a spoon to place soil in the pot. When the pot is about half full, use the spray bottle filled with water to dampen the soil. Fill the pot with soil to about a ½" from the top of the pot.
- Follow the instructions on the seed packet about how deep and how many seeds to plant.
- After planting the seeds, use the spray bottle filled with water again to dampen the soil. The soil should be damp, not wet or watery.
- Place the pot on a tray that will collect any excess water. Loosely cover the tray with a plastic bag or plastic wrap until the seeds sprout.

As the children are planting their seeds, wonder who has planted seeds before, what kinds of seeds, and what happened after they planted them. After the children have put their pot on the tray, find a spot where the tray may be placed for optimal sunlight.

The seeds will need to be tended to until your next session together. The soil will need to be misted every couple of days, and the tray(s) will need to be rotated as the seeds begin to sprout. Do this yourself, recruit helpers, or bring the tray(s) of pots home to tend to the seeds.

Let the children know what the plan is so that they will understand both that the seeds need consistent care and that their seeds will be cared for in their absence.

THE WORLD IN OUR CARE

M T

Show the YouTube video "Touch the Earth Lightly" (bit.ly/FMTouchTheEarth, 2:18, stopping after the first verse at 0:33). Teach the children the first verse, showing the video again, pausing after each phrase, and inviting the children to repeat it with you. Show the video again to 0:33, inviting the children to sing the first verse together.

After singing, ask the children what they think it means to "touch the earth lightly" and "use the earth gently."



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

YAY, GOD!



Invite the children to recall what kind of seeds they planted in “Starting Seeds” (p. 8). Affirm that plants are a part of God’s creation and wonder what other things are part of God’s creation. Note that, while people and elements in the natural world are part of God’s creation, someone might name something like a book, a building, or a computer. Suggest that items like these could be considered part of God’s creativity in creating humans with knowledge and imagination.

Ask the children what it means to appreciate something or someone. If necessary, explain that it means to see or understand what is special and to give thanks for it or them. Tell the children that they are going to play an appreciation game for God’s creation. Explain that you will hold up a picture and one or more people can hold up their hand to give appreciation for what is in the picture. Tell the children that, as you call on them, they should say something special about what is in the picture and then express their thanks to God. Wonder together different ways the children might express thanks, such as clapping their hands, saying “thank you,” doing a happy dance, making the sign language sign for “thank you” by touching the tips of their right fingers to their lips and then moving their hand upward, and so forth.

Play the game using the pictures cut apart from Resource Pages 1 and 2.

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- Pictures cut apart from Resource Pages 1 and 2



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

ONCE UPON A TIME



Ask the children what they think will happen next if you say the words “Once upon a time . . .” Make some silly suggestions such as “Will I begin to dance?” or “Do you say those words before you go to bed?” If necessary, tell the children that those words are often used to begin a story. Hold up a Bible and turn to the first page of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. Tell the children that the Bible is a collection of many books, sixty-six of them, that have many stories about God and God’s people. Ask the children how they think the very first story begins. After a few suggestions, comment that it does not begin with the words “Once upon a time” but the words “In the beginning,” and it tells the story of creation, of how the world and all that’s in it, came to be.

Read aloud the adapted Bible story from Genesis 1:1–5, 14–19 and Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 on Resource Page 3. After the story, engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What were the things that God made first?
- According to the story, how did these things come to be?
- If you were creating a world, what would you start with?
- We are going to continue this story in the next session. What things do you think God might create next?

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- Resource Page 3
 - Bible



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Internet-connected device
- Rhythm instruments
- Scarves or ribbons for dancing

DANCE AND TURN



Recall with the children that the story of God creating the world began with day and night, which also created time and seasons. Tell the children that there is a song that tells about different purposes for time, such as a time for work and a time for play, a time to sleep and a time to wake. Invite the children to listen for the different times mentioned in the song as you show the YouTube video “Dan Zanes & Elizabeth Mitchell with You Are My Flower—Turn! Turn! Turn!” (bit.ly/FMTurnTurnTurn, 4:25).

After the video, ask the children what were some of the different kinds of time they heard in the song. Wonder what times are their favorite times, even ones not mentioned. Show the video again and invite the children to dance or play a rhythm instrument along with the song. Tell them that it is a time to dance and a time to make music.

- One sheet of large construction paper in each of the following colors: orange, blue, green, yellow
- Magazines and catalogs
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

MY FAVORITE SEASON!



Ask the children what the four seasons are. Recall together that the seasons were part of God’s creation, allowing time for warmth and coolness and a time for things to grow and to rest. Tell the children that they are going to make collages for each season using pictures from magazines and catalogs. Label each sheet of construction paper as follows and display them on a table identifying them for the children:

- Orange: Autumn
- Blue: Winter
- Green: Spring
- Yellow: Summer

Provide the magazines and catalogs, scissors, and glue sticks. Invite the children to find pictures that fit for each of the four seasons, cut them out, and glue them to the appropriate sheet of paper. As they are working, engage them in conversation about the pictures they are finding and the season where they think they belong. When the collages are complete, display the murals that the group created in a visible place in your meeting space.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Two suns and two moons cut from card-stock copies of Resource Page 4 for each child
- Crayons, markers
- Single-hole punch
- Yarn or ribbon
- Hanger for each child

DAILY PRAYER OF THANKS



Tell the children that one way we show our appreciation to God is through prayer. Comment that, when we pray, we can share thanks, we can praise God’s good creation and good works, and we can ask for God’s protection for people and things that need it. Tell them that they will make a prayer mobile that they can hang in their homes to remind them to pray each morning and each night.

Brainstorm things that the children appreciate about God’s creation in the morning. Have them consider the weather, such as sun, rain, clouds, or snow. Suggest that they think about what they do in the morning: use water to wash faces and brush teeth; get dressed with clothes made from cotton; eat breakfast of perhaps milk from cows, cereal from grain, juice from plants or trees, eggs from chicken, and such. Then do the same for things in the evening.

Provide the children with two suns and two moons cut from card-stock copies of Resource Page 4 and invite the children to draw pictures of something they appreciate and give thanks to God for in the morning on the two sun shapes and the same for the evening on the two moon shapes. Assist the children in assembling the mobiles by punching holes in the shapes, tying yarn or ribbon to them, and hanging them from the hanger. Encourage the children to take their mobile home and hang it where they will see it each morning and evening to give thanks to God for these and other things they appreciate about God’s creation.

I SPY

Tell the children that they are going to play a game of I Spy where one person names something that they *spy*, or see, and the others have to guess what it is that the person has spied. Gather the children in the space you have chosen, outdoors, weather and location permitting, or indoors by a large window or doorway to see outside. Have helpers assist as needed, or if you need to form two groups to play the game in different locations.

Begin the game by saying, “I spy with my little eye, something (*name the color of an item*) that God created.” When someone guesses the item you chose, invite that person to express their thanks to God, recalling the different ways they did so in “Yay, God!” (p. 9): clapping their hands, saying “thank you,” doing a happy dance, making the sign language sign for “thank you” by touching the tips of their right fingers to their lips and then moving their hand upward, or another way of their choosing. Have the children take turns being the one who spies.

G

Helpers (optional)



Follow church policy regarding leaving the building with children if you go outside.



FOLLOWING JESUS

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

AM M T

Tell the children that each session will close with the song “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” a song that celebrates God’s creation. Explain that they will sing the chorus each week along with a new verse written for each session. Teach the children the chorus by lining out the words with the accompanying motions:

All things bright and beautiful, (*raise arms above head in a sweeping motion*) /

all creatures great and small. (*spread arms wide, then hold thumb and pointer finger about 2 inches apart*) /

All things wise and wonderful, (*point to temple and nod head*) /

the Lord God made them all. (*put hands together in prayer, then open and spread arms wide*) /

Internet-connected device

Invite the children to sing the chorus as you play the YouTube video “All Things Bright and Beautiful (Crimond)” (bit.ly/FMAllThingsInstrumental, 3:23). There is an introduction to the song till 0:04, and then the chorus stops at 0:21.

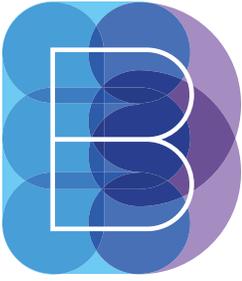
After learning and singing the chorus, teach the children the words to a new verse created for today’s session in the same way:

God made the light and darkness,
God made the day and night.
God gave us time and seasons,
the moon and sun so bright.

Then sing together the verse, beginning at 0:21, followed by the chorus, and stopping at 0:56.







BIBLE STORY

BASED ON GENESIS 1:1–5, 14–19; ECCLESIASTES 3:1–8

How did the world start?

That is a big question!

The Bible has a story that imagines how it might have happened.

In the beginning, the world did not have a shape. The world did not have a color. There was nothing at all, so God created.

God spoke and said, “Let there be light.” And there was light!

God spoke and created earth and sky, wind and water, light and darkness.

“What good things!” God said.

The time of light, God called Day; and the time of dark, God called Night.

The sun brought the day, and the moon watched over the night, sharing the job of waking the world and putting it to sleep. The days and nights moved through seasons giving all creation times to work and rest and times to plant and grow.

By creating the sun and the moon, times of light and darkness, warmth and coolness, God also created seasons and time. The hours and seasons gave purpose to everything in God’s world that we could imagine: time to plant and pick, time to be sad and to be happy, time to listen and to talk.

God did so much creating, but God was not done yet. There would be another day coming for more of God’s good creation!

