



Creating the universe

MEETING AIM

To explore the start of the story of creation and think about how creative God is.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-13

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

The story of creation from Genesis is rich with wonder and awe. There's no need to dwell on the hows and whys here. Rather, help the children experience the grandeur of God's creation and to think about how amazing God is to have created such amazing things.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Ask the children if they have ever seen any natural wonders, such as waterfalls, massive trees or big mountains. What was their favourite thing about what they saw?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: 'opposites' cards (see below)

Before the session, make simple pairs of cards showing all kinds of opposites: light and dark, tall and short, hot and cold, hard and soft, etc.

Shuffle these pairs together and spread them face down in front of the children. In turn, each child turns two cards over in an attempt to find a pair of opposites. Keep playing until the children have found all the opposites.

Depending on the age and abilities of your group you may prefer picture cards, toys or even to act out opposites.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a screen and light source (see below); garden canes; tissue paper; black paper; sticky tape

You are going to tell the story using shadow puppets, and you'll need to do some preparation before the session to get everything ready.

First, make your screen. Use a white sheet or roll of drawing paper stretched as flat as possible. The size and positioning is up to you, as long as the children can see it and you can fit a lamp and puppets behind it. Use available furniture and clothes pegs or masking tape to hold your screen in place. A desk lamp will work best as a light source; remember to stay behind the lamp, as anything in front of the light will appear on the screen.

You will also need to make your 'puppets'. Take a large sheet of pale blue tissue and attach a garden cane across the top so it looks like a sideways flag and you can move it up and down. Do the same with a dark blue sheet. These are your sea and sky. Cut some hill shapes from black paper and also attach to a cane with tape. This is your land. In the same way make some vine or beanstalk shapes. Now you are ready to tell the story. You may want to practise beforehand so everything flows well and looks as you want it to. Ideally there will be two leaders operating the puppets. If necessary, you can sit on either side of the screen while you do this so you can still supervise the children! Once you are all set up and ready, tell this story:

Dim the lights and start with the lamp off. In the beginning, God created the sky and the earth. The earth was empty and dark but God's Spirit was there. God said: "Let there be light!" and there was. Turn on the lamp. God called the dark night and the light day. That was the end of the first-ever day.

Hold both blue tissue paper 'flags' together so they make one colour when you hold them in front of the light. God decided to separate the sea and the sky, so he created air. *Move the pale blue 'flag' slowly upwards and the dark down so two stripes of different shades of blue appear on the screen.* That was the end of the second day.

Then God made land come out of the seas. *The second leader uses the land puppet and makes it gently rise up from the dark blue.* He was happy with what he had made. Lay your puppets down. Now God created all kinds of plants to grow on the earth. *Take your beanstalk and vine puppets and place them at the very bottom of the screen and move them upwards as if they are growing.* Some plants to make seeds to eat, some to grow fruit, and all of them to make seeds to grow more plants. God was very pleased. That was the end of the third day.

Tell the story as often as the children would like to. If the group is interested, let the children retell the story themselves and operate the puppets too. Make sure they keep away from your light source, as it may be quite hot.

**CHATTING TOGETHER**

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take part in the discussion:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think God felt when he made the world?
- What do you think God created next?
- Are you good at creating? What things do you like to make?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: small pots; sticky labels; crayons or felt-tip pens; either seeds (such as sunflower seeds) and sterile compost or cress seeds and cotton wool

Plant some seeds with the children. You could go the whole hog with compost and flowerpots or keep it small with cress on cotton wool. The important thing is to talk with them about what plants need to grow and how God created the things they need, about how plants give food and shelter both to us and to the animals. Chat about your favourite flowers and fruit, about climbing trees and kicking through leaves; marvel at God's creation together.

Encourage the children to write their name on a sticky label and decorate it. They should then stick it onto their pot and take it home with them..

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: pictures from 'Creative time'

If you're meeting together in person, place all the pictures from 'Creative time' in the middle of the floor and gather around them. If you're online, ask the children to hold their pictures in front of their camera.

Say a simple prayer thanking God for all these times when we have been helped. Encourage children to shout out any individual examples they have drawn. Then thank the Holy Spirit for always being with us, and for helping and comforting us.

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives in Worcestershire with her two children.



Filling the universe

MEETING AIM

To explore the second half of the creation story and to reflect on what it means to be made by God..

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:14-31

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This session follows on from Session 1, and completes the creation story in Genesis 1 (the seventh day is covered in Session 3). Enjoy chatting about the different creatures God creates, but also try to explore the idea that God made people to be like him, and that we too are made by God (see Psalm 139). Children may not immediately see the impact of this, but you're laying the foundations for them to explore this further in the future.

Note: the 'Chatting together' questions are intentionally similar to Session 1. Children will enjoy the repetition (if they remember the questions from your previous session) and the same questions will reinforce the sense of God's creativity and the fact that we are creative too..

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Ask children to talk about what their favourite animals are. Why do they like those particular creatures?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: screen and light source; paper cut-outs of different animals; garden canes; sticky tape

To make the screen, stretch a white sheet across your space. Use available furniture and clothes pegs or masking tape to hold the sheet in place. Place a desk lamp (or similar) behind the sheet. (If you did Session 1, then use the same screen in this session.)

Tape the animal cut-outs to the canes so that you can hold them up in front of your light source to cast a shadow on the screen. Switch on the lamp and hold each

animal up in turn for the children to guess. You can add sound effects to help if you aren't confident in your abilities.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: screen and light source from 'Play'; black paper; canes; scissors; sticky tape; playdough

Before the session, create shadow puppets from black paper and garden canes. You will need a sun, a moon, a variety of birds, land animals and sea animals. If you don't feel artistic, there are various templates available online. If you feel adventurous, the internet has lots of ideas to add colour and movement to your puppets. You also need two people puppets, a man and a woman. When you are ready, tell this story:

Do you remember? The last time we met together, we talked about how God created light and dark! Well, after that he created the sun to watch over the day. Move the sun across the screen to mimic sunrise and sunset. And he made the moon to watch over the night. Make the moon rise in the sky.

On the fifth day, he filled the sea with animals. Get out your sea animal puppets, encourage the children to name all the animals they can. Push the ends of the canes into playdough to hold them upright if you run out of hands. Then God made every kind of birds. Use your bird puppets, sound effects optional! God blessed them all.

On the sixth day, he turned to the earth and created all kinds of animals. Tame animals, wild animals, small, crawling animals. Show your animal puppets. God saw they were good and said: "Let all the animals have babies and fill the earth." Then God decided to make people and to make them like himself. He made a man and he made a woman. Show your people puppets. God told them to look after the world and the animals. He said that he would give them all the plants for food. God was pleased with his creation.

Tell the story as often as the children would like to. If the group is interested, let the children retell the story themselves and operate the puppets too. Make sure they keep away from your light source, as it may be quite hot.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take part:

- What was your favourite part?
- How do you think God felt when he made the world?
- What do you think God did next?
- Are you good at or like creating?
- How does it feel to know that people (and you) were made by God?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: animal and people shapes cut out of paper; art materials; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Give each child the outline of a different animal to decorate with colouring, painting or sticking. As you work, talk to them about all the different animals: which ones are their favourites and why? Where in the world do they come from? How has God made them just right for the places they live? How can we help to look after them?

Once everyone has decorated their animal, give everyone a person shape. Encourage the children to create self-portraits by decorating their person shape. As you work this time, talk about how we are all created by God. Comment on and celebrate the diversity of the self-portraits (and so of the children in your group). Help the children to reflect on what it might mean to be made by God.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: pictures from 'Creative time'

Sit in a circle, taking turns to say thank you to God for a different animal. This could be the child's favourite animal or the one they decorated (which they should wave around). Finish by saying this prayer:

Thank you, God, for all the animals: big or small, fluffy or scaly. From tiny little bugs to the enormous elephant, you made them all and they are wonderful. And thank you, God, for making people, including me! Amen.

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives in Worcestershire with her two children.



Taking a rest

MEETING AIM

To discover that God rested after finishing his creation, and about how it is good for us to rest too.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 2:1-4

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

Younger children usually have more time to rest than most of us, but they might not have explored how important rest is. After God's awesome, epic work in creating the whole universe, he rests and reiterates how much people need to rest; rest is God-given and beneficial to all. This session gives children plenty of opportunity to play at resting and to explore how they rest best.

If you're short of time this month, you could merge Sessions 1 to 3 into one session. Select activities from the different session to create your own, but make sure you include elements from each one.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Ask the children what they like to do to relax. Do they take naps? Perhaps they like reading (or being read to), drawing or colouring or watching a TV programme. Talk about how we all need to rest, through sleep or doing an activity we enjoy.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: balloons; lively and quiet music and the means to play it

Blow up a balloon and bat it to one another without letting it touch the ground. Play the lively music and make the game as energetic as possible. Then play the quiet music and adapt your game to match. What different lively and slow moves can the children do to keep the balloon in the air?

Have spare balloons ready in case a balloon pops, and make sure you pick up any broken pieces straight away. Comment about how the balloon floats gently and

how it's difficult to make the balloon fly fast, no matter how hard you hit it!

Be aware that some children don't like balloons bursting, so check beforehand that everyone in your group is content to play. Some children might be happier sitting with a helper at the side of the game.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: rugs; blankets; cushions; pillows; duvets; child-friendly Bible or Bible storybook (optional)

Show the children the rugs and blankets you have brought and work together to create a welcoming space where you can all lie down and get comfortable. When you're done, all settle down. Ask the children what they like to do when they are tired and have worked very hard.

If you did Sessions 1 and 2, recap what God has done so far in the creation story. Can the children remember what he has created? What a lot of work! If you haven't done the previous sessions, then tell the story using a child-friendly version of the Bible (such as the Contemporary English Version) or a children's Bible storybook. Once you have done that, tell today's story.

God had finished his creation, he had made everything in heaven and earth and was happy with it. *All cheer and shout thank you to God.* On the seventh day he took a rest. *All stretch and yawn.* He called the seventh day a holy day because it was a special day for resting.

Our day of resting is usually when we go to church. It's a time when there's usually no work, and there's definitely no school. Sometimes people have to work, but most people get to have a rest (and the people who have to work on Sundays will be able to rest on a different day).

God knew that rest was very important. And so he rested after finishing his amazing creation! *All lie down and pretend to sleep.*

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take part in the discussion:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think God felt when he made the world?
- Why do you think God rested on the seventh day?
- What do you do when you rest? Do you feel better afterwards?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: balloons or the equipment needed for your chosen game; relaxing area created for 'Bible story'

Talk about a busy day in your life and ask the children what a busy day looks like for them. How do you feel after all that activity? How do you feel when you are tired? Do you do your best work? Are you happy? Are you kind?

Play the game from 'Play' again or choose a different energetic game to play. You are aiming to get the children tired and glad of a rest! Once you have finished and everyone is a bit tired, you could retire to your relaxing area that you made for 'Bible story'. Chat about how it feels to rest.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: relaxing area created for 'Bible story'; gentle music and the means to play it

Have a quiet, restful prayer time in your relaxing area. Play some gentle music and let the children take pleasure in resting and relaxing.

Finish with a simple: "Thank you, God, for teaching us how to rest. Amen."

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives in Worcestershire with her two children.



Adam and Eve

MEETING AIM

To explore how we are made in God's image and to be in relationship with him and each other.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 2:5-25

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This session will help to lay the foundation for the idea that we are made in God's image and made to be in relationship. While most younger children will only understand this in its most basic form, we are preparing the way for deeper discovery later on in life. At this point, it's enough to hear how God loved Adam enough to find him the perfect friend. God loves us so much, and wants us to be friends with him, and also be friends with each other..

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Ask the children if they have a garden. What's it like? Perhaps if the children don't have a garden, is there a park near their house that they like? Or maybe you live in the countryside and there are beautiful rivers, fields or hills within walking distance? Chat about all these things together.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: ball or soft toy

Help each child to think of an animal that starts with the same letter as their name. For example, for a child called Maisie, they could choose mouse, moose or magpie. Put the animal name together with a child's, such as Maisie Mouse. You might want to do a little research beforehand if you have any unusual letters in your group!

Use a ball or soft toy to throw to one another, calling the animal name of the person you are throwing to as you do.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: screen and light source (see below); cut-outs of two people stuck onto garden canes; cut-outs of animals stuck onto canes; black paper; scissors; marker pen; sticky tape

To make the screen, stretch a white sheet across your space. Use available furniture and clothes pegs or masking tape to hold the sheet in place. Place a desk lamp (or similar) behind the sheet. (If you did Session 1 and / or 2, then use the same screen in this session.

Cut some 'Garden of Eden' scenery out of black paper and stick it to the screen (or draw it directly onto the screen with a marker). For example, have some birds and clouds in the sky, grass and flowers underfoot and trees on either side. Don't forget to leave a clear space in the middle of the scenery for the action.

Gather the children around the screen, turn the light on and tell this story:

God wanted someone to look after his creation so he made man from dust and breathed life into him. He named the man Adam and put him in a garden called Eden to live. *Put one of your people puppets in the garden.*

The garden was very beautiful and full of trees and fruit. A river ran through it, helping everything to grow. God told Adam to care for the garden but never to eat the fruit from one particular tree. *Move the Adam puppet around the 'garden'.*

God looked at Adam and thought it wasn't good for him to be all alone. He brought Adam animals so he could give them names and maybe find a friend. *Put the animals one by one into the garden, encourage the children to name each animal: "Adam named this one a..."*

The animals were wonderful but none of them was right to be Adam's special friend. So God made a woman. *Stand the other person puppet next to Adam.* Her name was Eve and she was just right for him and became his wife..

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take part in the discussion:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What are your favourite animals?
- Who are your favourite people?
- Why do you think God made a friend for Adam?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: playdough; wipe-clean mats or tablecloth

Give each child a lump of playdough and a mat (or put a tablecloth on a table) and help them to shape the dough into people. As you work, talk about the way God moulded Adam from dirt, that he made him in his own image. What does that mean?

Go on to make a friend for your playdough person. Why do we need friends? What things do you enjoy doing with your friends? Once everyone has finished, display the people and encourage the group to take their playdough friends home at the end of the session. Comment that the children can think about God's amazing creativity whenever they look at their people. They can also think about how much joy their friends bring them.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: large map of the world; playdough people from 'Creative time'

Spread your map of the world out in front of the children. Ask them to put one of their playdough people onto different parts of the world. Remind the group that God created the whole world and everyone in it.

Ask the group to hold their other playdough person in their hands as you pray this prayer to finish:

Thank you, God, for your wonderful creation.

For the world we live in, the food we eat, the animals we love and the people who care about us.
Amen.

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives in Worcestershire with her two children.



Creation

MEETING AIM

To explore the Bible's account of how God made the world.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-2:4

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

The creation story is one of the oldest parts of the Bible, and people probably told it aloud to each other long before it was written down. Like so many ancient stories, it is simple and profound: it has been told down the years to help people of faith understand their creator God and how they and their world came to be. In this session, don't get bogged down by a 'creationism versus science' debate. The aim here is to open up space for children to explore and ask questions about the Bible story as it is written. Encourage them to share knowledge they have about the world they live in, and to wonder about this ancient story with each other and God.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Ask the children to think about what they enjoy making. Share your own creative passion and find out about each other's, whether it be music, baking, drawing, Lego building or something really unusual. Talk about what is involved in the human act of creation, such as daydreaming about big ideas, planning, making mistakes and working hard.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

This is a game to stretch children's brains to look as far back in time as possible.

Ask the children about the oldest thing they know. It must be something they have personal experience of. Have they visited a Victorian building? Seen a Viking sword in a museum or been to a Roman ruin? How far back can they go?

Use the length of the room as an imaginary timeline from the beginning of time until now. Asking each in turn for their contribution, place the children along the timeline. Debate the relative positions together. For example, did the Vikings or Victorians come first? Or, more challenging, is a fossil older than a mountain? Agree on the timeline order for all the children's suggestions, then invite second attempts to think of something even older and so move further down the timeline. This time, children may not have personal experience, but just knowing about (for example) an amoeba is enough! As a group, how old can you go?

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: the seven Bible readings (see below) in an accessible translation, printed in large print on separate pieces of paper; some large, coloured pieces of cloth (black, white, green and blue) such as scarves, sheets or tablecloths (optional)

Explain to the children that the Bible begins further back than our timeline reached, right back before the beginning of time itself. It begins with the story of how everything was made. Today you are going to tell this creation story using only your bodies (and pieces of cloth, if using).

As a warm-up, lead the children in making star shapes with their hands; make a stormy sea together using actions or a blue cloth; individually, make the shape of a tree; make the shape of a rabbit with your hands or body. As a final challenge, use your bodies to act out an explosion in space!

Give out the first six readings. Work together as a whole group, or divide the readings between smaller groups of children. If you have them, they can choose their coloured cloth(s). The children decide how they are going to represent each day, using their bodies as expressively as possible. Give them a short time to practise.

Day one: Nothing, then light and dark (Genesis 1:1-5)

Day two: Sky (Genesis 1:6-8)

Day three: Land, sea, plants and trees (Genesis 1:9-13)

Day four: Sun, moon and stars (Genesis 1:14-19)

Day five: Fish and birds (Genesis 1:20-23)

Day six: Animals and humans (Genesis 1:24-31)

To tell the story, either a child or a leader reads each Bible passage aloud in turn, while the group energetically acts out their representation of that day of creation. By the end, everyone should be quite tired! Invite everyone to lie down and make themselves comfortable as you read day seven. Explain that this will be followed by a short time of quiet and stillness, so they can rest and think about everything that happened in the story.

Day seven: Rest (Genesis 2:1-4)

Encourage everyone to lie still and stay quiet for a short time.



CHATTING TOGETHER **5 MINS**

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Which day of creation did you like best?
- How did you feel about having a rest?
- Is anything missing from the creation story? Does this matter?
- What questions would you like to ask God about creation?
- What would you like to say to God about how the world is now?

CREATIVE TIME **10 MINS**

You will need: paper and pens

Invite the children to be creators: can they design a new plant or creature that the world could benefit from today? For example, a lizard that can digest plastic or a tree that produces fruit all year round. As they draw, chat about why their creation would be a good addition to the planet. What does our world need today? What can we do to help?

PRAYER **5 MINS**

Teach the British Sign Language signs for 'Nothing' and 'Everything' (search signbsl.com for 'vacuum: the absence of matter' and 'everything'). Practise doing the actions together when you say 'Nothing' and 'Everything'. During the prayer, you will encourage children to 'supersize' their 'Everything' sign to indicate the hugeness of creation, so that by the third time they are using their whole body and stretching out their arms as wide as they can reach. Then say this prayer:

Creator God,
 in the beginning there was NOTHING.
 Then you made EVERYTHING.
 It was bigger than that – you made EVERYTHING!
 You have given us more than we can possibly imagine.
 Thank you, God, for absolutely EVERYTHING!!
 Amen.

CLAIRE BENTON-EVANS

writes for Kevin Mayhew and is the youth and children officer for the Diocese of Edinburgh:
www.clairebentonevans.com.



Adam and Eve

MEETING AIM

To learn how the relationship began between God, human beings and the natural world.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 2:5-25

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

Genesis 1 gave us the 'big picture' version of creation, taking us from nothing to everything in six days. Genesis 2 is a close-up on the making of human beings and their home, the Garden of Eden. It shows us more about how God related to the first people he made, and how they related to each other and their world.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Welcome the children as they arrive, and chat about pets. What pets do they have? What pets would they like? Invite them to share funny stories about the animals they own.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: photographs of strange creatures

Before the session, search online for pictures of strange creatures. Put these into a PowerPoint presentation or print them off.

Show the children the photos and marvel at the weirdness of these creatures. Which ones are their favourites? Chat about human beings: would an alien race think that we are weird? Why?

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a roll of lining paper; felt-tip pens; scissors; masking tape

Sit the children in a circle and tell this story:

When God first made the heavens and the earth, it was as if he was starting with a blank sheet of paper. *Roll out a long piece of paper in the middle of the circle.*

Nothing had started to grow, because there hadn't been any rain, and there were no rivers yet. God took some of the earth and made it into the shape of a man.

Fold over the end of the sheet and draw a simple person shape on it. *Cut off the whole folded end and cut out the person shape, cutting through both pieces of paper but leaving the hands joined at the fold, as in a paper chain of people.*

God breathed life into the man, and he was alive! *Hold up the figure, with the second one folded behind it, and make it dance.*

Then God really got busy. He made a garden full of trees! Beautiful trees, shady trees, trees with delicious fruit, nuts and berries, even trees that smelled wonderful: God made them all! *Cut off individual lengths of paper from the big roll of lining paper. Lead children in making simple paper trees: roll each length of paper up into a tube and use masking tape to secure the end. Make long cuts down from the top of the tube to make branches, and some short cuts upwards to make roots. Pull the innermost branches upwards to make the tree grow. Splay out the roots and use masking tape to stick the trees to the roll of lining paper (you may also need to stick the edges of the paper down to the floor or table). Make two large trees yourself and place them in the middle of your paper garden.*

This was the Garden of Eden. In the middle of the garden, God made two special trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

All these trees needed watering, so God made a river. It flowed into the garden and split into four great rivers that watered whole countries. *Invite everyone to draw a big river flowing into the garden and dividing.*

Then God took the man he had made and put him in the Garden of Eden to look after it. *Lean your paper man against a tree in the middle of the garden.*

God said to the man: "You can eat anything you want from any of these trees, apart from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That fruit will kill you."

Then God said to the man: "You need a partner!" So God created every kind of animal and bird, and they filled the garden. The man named them all. *Invite everyone to draw a creature in the garden, and write its name.*

But the man still hadn't found a partner, so God put him into a deep sleep. *Lie your paper man down.*

God took one of the man's ribs and made it into a woman: he introduced them both to each other. *Unfold the second figure from behind the first and stand them up together, holding hands.*

They were both naked, but they weren't at all embarrassed! They were Adam and Eve.



CHATTING TOGETHER **5 MINS**

Ask the group these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Which part of the story did you most enjoy making?
- What questions would you like to ask God about this story?
- How do you imagine the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- I wonder what this story tells us about our relationship with nature.
- What does this story make you think about God?

CREATIVE TIME **10 MINS**

You will need: visual aids from 'Bible story'; art materials

Invite everyone to draw their favourite creatures in the garden, and write their names. They could decorate the trees with leaves and fruit. As you fill the garden together, chat about what you love in the natural world, and what the children think of today's Bible story.

PRAYER **5 MINS**

You will need: long strips of paper; pens and scissors

Talk about how God made everything, including us! His creation is amazing, but we often take it for granted. It's good for us to stop, look around and praise God for everything he has made.

Demonstrate how to make a paper chain of people and invite everyone to do so. Explain that on each person, you are going to write a prayer that praises God for his creation. The prayers could be general ("Wow!") or specific ("Thank you for cuddles with my cat"). Allow enough time for everyone to make their people and write their prayers. Add the paper chains of praying people to the garden you made earlier.

Read out this Bible verse: "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (Psalm 24:1, NRSV).

Finally, say: "Lord, we praise you for everything you have made." Encourage the group to shout together: "Amen!"

CLAIRE BENTON-EVANS

writes for Kevin Mayhew and is the youth and children officer for the Diocese of Edinburgh:
www.clairebentonevans.com.



The Fall

MEETING AIM

To explore how Adam and Eve let God down.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 3

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

In the Genesis account of creation, this story marks a seismic shift from God's original world, which was very good, to the world we know today, in which bad things happen. The aim of this session is to share this ancient story simply, while encouraging children actively to engage with it and wonder about it. It focuses on a fundamental of faith – obedience to God – and so is a good place for children to practise making connections between the Bible's stories of fallen humanity and the choices they make in their own lives.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Welcome the children as they arrive and introduce the idea of "If I ruled the world..." What would they do or say if they were in charge of everything? What rules might they make?

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: a single exotic fruit (such as a pomegranate or persimmon) which children will be unlikely to recognise; some bowls of familiar fruit such as grapes, strawberries and orange segments
 Display the bowls of fruit with the mystery fruit in the middle. Ask children what one thing they would choose to eat, and wonder together about what the mystery fruit might taste like. Might it be more delicious than anything else on the table, or a nasty surprise? Who would choose it? Discuss choices, then introduce and cut open the exotic fruit. Ask everyone to save their choice of fruit to eat during the story.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a large sheet of paper; pens; copies of Genesis 3 divided into four separate readings with these titles: 'The first choice' (verses 1-6), 'The first consequence' (verse 7), 'The next choice' (verses 8-13), 'The ultimate consequence' (verses 14-24)

The aim is to explore this story step by step, as you create a decision tree (search online for examples of this) to show Adam's and Eve's choices and their consequences. Spread the paper out in front of the children and tell this story:

Our story begins with the first people, Adam and Eve, in their perfect garden of Eden. *At the top of the page, write "ADAM + EVE + GARDEN".*

God gave them everything and said: "It's all yours! You can eat fruit from any of these trees." But he gave them one rule: "Do not eat the fruit from this one tree – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – or you will die." So what choices did Adam and Eve have at this point? *Invite suggestions and draw the first two decision branches: "Eat the fruit" and "Don't eat the fruit". (The children may also add other original ideas.) Discuss possible reasons for choosing either, eg "I wonder what it tastes like?", "God says we mustn't" or "We'll die". Hand out and read 'The first choice' (verses 1-6) together, then discuss further reasons for eating the fruit, from Eve's point of view. Hand out and read 'The first consequence' (verse 7) together and add the next branch from "Eat the fruit", eg "Gained knowledge" (use a phrase that the children agree on).*

They have broken the first rule in the history of the world! What choices do Adam and Eve have now? Invite suggestions and draw the next decision branches: *"Try to cover up what they've done" and "Own up and say sorry" (the children may also add other ideas). Discuss Adam's and Eve's possible reasons for choosing any option. Identify what Adam and Eve did next by reading together 'The next choice' (verses 8-13). Draw the next branch from "Try to cover up" and label it "Blame each other". Hand out and read together 'The ultimate consequence' (verses 14-24) and add the next branches: "Punished" and "Banished" (again, use the children's choice of words). Look back together at the decision tree illustrating Adam and Eve's choices and their consequences. Go back to the choices: what might have happened if Adam and Eve had not eaten the forbidden fruit? What might have happened if they'd owned up and said sorry?*



CHATTING TOGETHER **5 MINS**

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What questions would you like to ask God about this story?
- Christians sometimes call this story the Fall, because it's about how human beings 'fell' from a perfect way of being. Whose fault do you think the Fall was?
- What rules has God given us?
- I wonder why God gave Adam and Eve (and us) the ability to choose.
- Have you ever faced a hard decision? How did you decide?

CREATIVE TIME **10 MINS**

You will need: Lego or Playmobil

Ask children to create a scene from today's story. As they do so, chat together about where they would physically place themselves in the scene. If they think they'd be in the garden of Eden, whereabouts would they like to be and why?

PRAYER **5 MINS**

You will need: a whiteboard; some whiteboard pens; a dry cloth

Draw a simple decision tree at the top of the board with 'My choice' at the top and two branches labelled 'My way' and 'God's way'.

Invite everyone to pause for a moment and think about a time when they did something wrong – when they chose to go their own way instead of God's way. Encourage everyone to say sorry to God by coming forward to write "Sorry" on the whiteboard under the 'My way' branch. Go on to say this prayer:

God, we are truly sorry for the things we have done wrong. May you forgive us and help us to do things your way from now on. Amen.

Pause, then say: "God is always ready to forgive our wrongdoing and give us a fresh start, like this." Invite the youngest member of the group to wipe off all the 'Sorrlys', leaving the simple decision tree.

CLAIRE BENTON-EVANS

writes for Kevin Mayhew and is the youth and children officer for the Diocese of Edinburgh:
www.clairebentonevans.com.



Cain and Abel

MEETING AIM

To learn about offering our best to God, rather than outdoing each other.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 4:1-16

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

The Bible doesn't explain why God preferred Abel's offering to Cain's: the key verse (4:5) is very difficult in Hebrew. The writer of Hebrews says that "by faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did" (Hebrews 11:4). Perhaps the difference lay in the men's hearts and intentions. Cain's murderous reaction suggests sibling rivalry, and this offers a way into the story with children. The following session begins by inviting them to consider how they compare themselves with others. It leads them to explore how they are each unique and special to God: the best we can offer him is ourselves.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if possible). Chat about who we compare ourselves to and why. Friends at school? Siblings? Celebrities? Friends on social media? How does it feel when we compare ourselves with other people?

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

Put children into pairs to play competitive games using just their hands, for example 'rock, paper, scissors' or thumb-wrestling (for a fun version, see Jane McGonigal's 'Massively multi-player thumb-wrestling' on YouTube). Talk together about how it feels to win or lose.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: face paint or eyeshadow; a body outline marked in chalk or masking tape on the floor in a corner of the room; a bag of cheap potatoes (of various sizes and shapes); a toy lamb

Explain that you're going to tell this story back-to-front, starting with the last thing that happened. Choose a volunteer and mark their forehead with face paint, then send them to the other side of the room. Wonder together about what the mark means and why this person has been sent away.

Then say that you'll see what happened just before this. Gather your group around the body outline on the floor. Wonder together about what this shape means. What might have happened here? Gather some feedback from the children. Then explain that you're going to tell the story from the beginning, to find out how these things came to be:

You remember Adam and Eve, the first people? They had two baby boys who grew up into very different men: Cain was a farmer and his brother Abel was a shepherd. *Move back to the centre of the room and choose two volunteers. Give them the lamb and the potatoes.*

Abel did herding, feeding and lambing; Cain did digging, sowing and harvesting. One day, the two brothers made an offering to God. *Choose someone to be God, and invite your volunteers to present the offerings as you tell the story.*

"Lord, this is for you," said Abel, and gave God his best lamb. His brother gave God some things he'd pulled out of the ground that morning; perhaps they were potatoes like these. "Here you are, God," said Cain.

Now God accepted Abel's gift gladly, but he paid no attention to Cain's offering. In fact, God completely ignored Cain.

Encourage the God volunteer to respond accordingly to the brothers, for example by shaking Abel's hand and turning his back on Cain.

Cain was furious! God said: "Why are you so cross? I'll accept the best you can offer me, but watch out that your worst side doesn't get the better of you."

Cain turned to Abel. "How about a walk?" The two brothers went off together across the fields.

Much later, only Cain came back. God said: "Where's your brother?" and Cain shrugged. *Gather your group around the body outline on the floor.*

Everything was quiet, but out in the fields, there was blood on the ground which spoke loud and clear. It said: "MURDER!"

God said: "Cain! You've killed your brother! Your punishment is that you'll find it difficult to grow anything from now on, and this is no longer your home, you'll always be on the run."

Cain cried: "But then I won't belong anywhere! Anyone could kill me!" *Summon the marked volunteer.*

But God made his mark on Cain, to protect him from harm. Then Cain left his farm, his home and God, and went a long way away. *Send the marked volunteer to the other side of the room.*



CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Which bit of the story can you imagine most clearly?
- Why do you think God liked Abel's offering, but not Cain's?
- What would you write in thought bubbles for Cain and Abel?
- What do you think about Cain's punishment?
- What questions would you like to ask God about this story?

CREATIVE TIME 10 MINS

You will need: small boxes or cardboard tubes; paper; pens; scissors; sticky tape; shiny gift wrapping; ribbon

Remind the children that Cain offered his crops to God, and Abel offered the best lambs from his flock. What could we offer to God?

Encourage responses by asking questions: does God want our electronic devices? Our money? Or something else? What can we give? What could we do for God?

Allow plenty of time for children to reflect on what they could offer to God, then write it down and gift-wrap it in a parcel addressed to God.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: the potatoes from 'Bible story'

Give everyone a potato. Allow time for them to study their particular potato closely and discover something unique about it. Go round the circle to introduce your potato and explain what is special about it.

Say that each of these potatoes is unique and special, and they are only spuds – think how much more wonderfully God has made each of you! Explain that you're going to ask God to help you see how unique and special you all are in his eyes:

"Lord, help me to see why I am special. Show me how to offer the best of myself to you."

Pause for a moment, then invite everyone to offer their prayers by building a potato prayer cairn. Say "Amen" together. As a final challenge, can children spot their own potato in the pile?

CLAIRE BENTON-EVANS

writes for Kevin Mayhew and is the youth and children officer for the Diocese of Edinburgh:
www.clairebentonevans.com.



Creation

MEETING AIM

To explore the wonder of the creation account.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-2:4

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This is the first of four sessions dealing with the opening chapters of Genesis. If taken literally, there are inconsistencies within the text and, when you try to compare these chapters with scientific data, there are more contradictions. Yet, to try to fit these stories within a scientific framework only limits their scope and message. Try to engage with the passage rather than external issues. If we hold the Bible as important, then what is in the Bible must be important. So, what are the important things that these 'pre-history' passages are saying to our young people?

GETTING STARTED 5 MINS

Welcome the young people as they arrive or log on. Share out your refreshments if you're meeting in person or have a 'snack-off' if you're online (seeing who has the most interesting snack).

INTRO ACTIVITY 5 MINS

You will need: small Lego sets (make sure you have all the parts and instructions)

Hand out the sets to the group and let them make the models. Depending on how much time you have available, attempt to make the models without the instructions, or even an image showing what the model will be.

Once you have finished, have a brief discussion about what is needed to make something: an idea; a plan; instructions; materials; someone to make it.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: candle (real or battery-operated); Bible

Ask the group to sit comfortably. Dim or turn off the lights and then light a candle. Make sure you have enough light to read the following highlights from today's Bible passage (from the NIV). Read out loud but leave space between each line:

In the beginning God...

"Let there be light!"

"Day."

"Night."

"Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water."

"Sky."

"Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear."

"Land."

"Seas."

"Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds."

"Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth."

"Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky."

"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."

"Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind."

"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

"I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food."

Turn the lights back on and now ask someone to read the whole passage from Genesis 1:1-2:4.

**CHATTING TOGETHER** 5 MINS

Encourage discussion around the passage:

- Did God have all the components that you listed in 'Intro activity'?
- Why is day seven mentioned? Why does God need a rest?
- What happens when God speaks?
- What is the start of Genesis all about?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: magazines; large sheets of paper; art materials

Create a creation collage on either one large piece of paper or seven smaller sheets. Using images from the magazines and your art materials, create a mixed media representation of each day. Show clearly, as a visual representation, what is made or created on each of the days.

Once complete, arrange them with day one and day four next to each other at the top. Underneath place days two and five, and under those place days three and six.

For day seven, explain that the God rested because everything was complete and finished. What images can represent that? How would they rest and relax if they had nothing left to do?

As they are making the images, encourage discussion on the following. What happened on each of the seven days? Can the group see any relationships between days four, five and six with one, two and three? The completeness and wholeness and wonder of creation can be seen if we step back and see it as a whole.

PRAYER 5 MINS

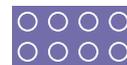
You will need: collages from 'Creative response'

Put the day seven collage in the middle and arrange the others around it. Make sure everyone can see the collage and use it as an inspiration to pray. Encourage the group to pray silently or out loud, if they are comfortable, thanking God for the heavens and the earth that have been created, and for what was created on each of the 'days'.

Take photos of the collage, keep them on a mobile phone and use them as a prompt to pray and thank God throughout the week.

DARREN HILL

tells stories at the creative minimalist:
darrenhill.com.



Adam and Eve

MEETING AIM

To see that God provided a paradise in the Garden of Eden.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 2:5-25

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This creation account of humanity in the garden appears to contradict the one in chapter 1. It is possible to get around this, but you need to bend the text and see one as an overview of the other. Again, it is of far more use to our relationship with God and the Bible to explore the passage and what it means than to try to fit everything together literally.

GETTING STARTED

5 MINS

Welcome the young people as they arrive or log on. Share out your refreshments if you're meeting in person or have a 'snack-off' if you're online (seeing who has the most interesting snack).

Invite the group to share the highs and lows of their week. Encourage them to think about what was good and what was bad and to begin to think about what might have made things better, or even perfect. Be aware of any pastoral issues within your group and make a note to deal with them. We may be looking at perfection this week, but our lives are often far from it.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: some magazines; pens and paper

Ask the group what they think paradise is. What would make the perfect world?

Working on their own, get the group to collate a series of images and words using the magazines that form their own personal view of paradise. They can list all the things that would make their own personal perfect world.

Once they have done this, invite feedback to the rest of the group, explaining why they have added or listed the items.

Can the group agree on the key elements any paradise would have?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: Bibles

Read Genesis 2:5-25 to the group, stopping as directed for the group to perform the actions and prompts, encouraging them to inhabit the Bible passage as it is read.

Pause at the end of verse 7 and say: "Take a deep breath through your nose with your mouth closed. Let the air fill your lungs. As you breath out, thank God for the gift of life."

Pause at the end of verse 9 and say: "Imagine two trees in the middle of a garden. They are obviously trees, but they are also more. They are important, yet you can't quite understand how."

Pause at the end of verse 14 and say: "Hear the water of the river as it flows out beyond the garden. It travels far into strange and amazing lands full of wonders."

Pause at the end of verse 17 and say: "Again the trees are mentioned. A command this time. The tree that is more than a tree is not to be eaten from. But there is no need to eat from it, because the garden provides all your needs."

Pause in verse 20, before it says no helper was found, and say: "This garden is full of amazing creatures. Animals that crawl, climb and even fly. Each has unique abilities, just like you. You are one of a kind."

Pause at the end of verse 22 and say: "You are no longer alone. There is another just like you, yet still unique in their own way."

Pause for a moment at the end of the reading before continuing. On a large piece of paper, ask the group to draw a tree, a river and stick figure. Beneath the stick figure write the word 'Adam'.

Ask the group to read the Bible passage themselves and add to the image all the things that God provided in the Garden of Eden. They can also add the things that were provided elsewhere from what came out of the garden.

Once they have done this, see how it compares to their own list from 'Intro activity'. What are the differences and what are the similarities?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Encourage discussion around the Bible passage using these questions:

- Why did God make the trees in the middle of the garden, if people weren't meant to go near them?
- How do you think Adam felt before and after God made him a companion?
- What might it have been like to walk with God in the garden?
- What does this story of creation tell us about God and our relationship with him?
- What is God saying to you now?

Ask the young people if they have any questions about the passage. If any of their questions can't be answered, make a note of them and tell the group that you will find out an answer and get back to them.

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper

Give out the pens and paper and ask the group to spend a few moments thinking about what it would have been like to be in the Garden of Eden with everything that had been provided.

Ask them to write a poem from the perspective of 'Adam', describing how everything is perfect in this paradise that God has provided. Depending on the abilities within your group, they can work in twos or threes, or write a monologue rather than a poem.

Once everyone has finished, share the writings with the rest of the group.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: pens; paper (ideally green, but white is fine); scissors; box

Ask the group to draw out a leaf shape on the paper and to cut it out. Now ask them to write a simple prayer that lists the things they have that they are thankful for. Go on to have a time of silent prayer when they give thanks to God for these things.

Ask the group to write their names on the leaf prayers and say that you will keep them safe till the next session when you will use them again. Explain that you will not be looking at them and will keep them safe in a box.

DARREN HILL

tells stories at the creative minimalist:
darrenhill.com.



The Fall

MEETING AIM

To explore what happens when we turn from God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 3

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

A Jewish interpretation of today's reading is very different than a Christian. The promise of Jesus naturally colours our reading of this passage. Yet, although it seems a vast chasm has appeared between God and humanity that only Jesus can bridge, the creator remains close to the lives of those created. God still clothes and cares for Adam and Eve.

GETTING STARTED

5 MINS

Welcome the young people as they arrive or log on. Share out your refreshments if you're meeting in person or have a 'snack-off' if you're online (seeing who has the most interesting snack). Chat about any recent stories where a public figure has 'done something wrong' and made an excuse for their actions. Has the group ever done this?

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

Split the young people into smaller groups or pairs. Give out the following situations and encourage them to put together some improvised role play. In each of the situations, the young people should come up with the most outrageous excuse possible.

Once everyone is ready, show the role plays to the rest of the group. At the end of all the role plays, the group should vote for the best excuse given. If appropriate, you can offer a small prize for the winner.

Situations:

- Homework not done
- Late for the Saturday job
- Return home with a ripped jacket
- Didn't buy the bread on the way home as you were supposed to

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

Explain that today's Bible passage is the story where Adam and Eve get thrown out of the Garden of Eden. Before reading the passage, you want to see how much of the story they already know.

Get the group to stand up, and ask what fruit Eve gave to Adam to eat. If you think it was an apple raise your right arm, if you are not sure, raise your left. Tell the group that the Bible only says it was a fruit, so those with their right arms in the air can sit down.

Ask those remaining standing: as this is about Adam and Eve doing something wrong, how many times is the word 'sin' used in the story? If they think it's three times or more, they should wag their finger like they're telling someone off. Fewer than three times, or they're not sure, they should put their finger on their lips like they're thinking about something. There is no mention of 'sin' in the Garden of Eden; we have to wait till the next session with Cain and Abel for 'sin' to get a mention. Anyone wagging their finger should sit down.

Then ask those still standing the name of the Garden of Eden story in the Bible. If they think it is 'The Fall' they should hold their hands out like they're balancing. If they're not sure, put their hands on their chin like they are pondering something. Even though the NIV and other Bibles title this story 'The Fall' (and this session of Journeying Together does too!), there is no official name for the story, and the word 'fall' doesn't appear anywhere in it. Anyone looking like they're balancing should sit down. Congratulations to those still standing!

Ask someone to read Genesis 3 at least twice. Then ask if anyone has any questions about the passage. You can point out that the snake is at no point referred to as the devil, or Satan, in this passage. The only supernatural being, apart from God, mentioned is the cherubim who guards access to the Tree of Life.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Encourage discussion around the Bible passage using these questions:

- What did Adam and Eve do when they realised what they had done?
- How often do we blame other people when we do something wrong? Why do we do that?

- What is God's reaction to Adam and Eve's actions? How would you describe his reaction? Fair? Harsh? Loving?
- The previously innocent Adam and Eve now have to deal with the real world. They are free to choose and face the consequences. How do we make choices? How do we face the consequences?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: large sheet of paper; marker pens; Bibles

On a large piece of paper, draw an outline of a tree. Make sure the Bible passage is open and available to everyone. Ask the young people to write the things that will happen because Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree. Ask them to think about what they now have to deal with, what has changed and what the consequences now are.

What about themselves? How are their lives different because of the wrong things that we, and others, do? Encourage them to choose a different colour marker and write on the tree the impact on their lives. What do they think God's take on all this is? How does God see us and the things we all do wrong?

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: leaf prayers from Session 2 'Prayer'; leaf shapes cut from paper; scissors; pens

Hand out the leaf prayers that you made in the last session. If you didn't do this, or some people weren't there, you will need to draw and cut out leaf shapes, one for each young person.

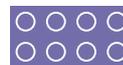
On the other side to their prayer of thanks, encourage the group to write words representing where they need or would like to be forgiven by God. Use the following words as a mediation while they do this.

Ask for forgiveness:

For when we have run away.
For when we have blamed someone else.
For when we have blamed something else.
Forgive me, for I have done something wrong.

DARREN HILL

tells stories at the creative minimalist:
darrenhill.com.



Cain and Abel

MEETING AIM

To explore why we should not let sin control us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 4:1-16

BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you're meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

There are always questions relating to Cain. After the events in this passage, who did he marry? Who were the people who would kill Cain? We can only answer these through supposition and through adding to the text. Again, like previous sessions, these issues can be a distraction from what the passage is saying. Even though Cain's offering did not receive favour, God was still talking to him. Cain was warned about not letting his anger control him.

GETTING STARTED

5 MINS

Welcome the young people as they arrive or log on. Share out your refreshments if you're meeting in person or have a 'snack-off' if you're online (seeing who has the most interesting snack). Ask if anyone has felt aggrieved by something or felt like justice hasn't been done (be aware of any issues the young people may be going through).

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: paper and pens

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Read these 'laws' out and ask the young people to write 'true' or 'false' for each one. Are they true laws or not?

- All whales found in the United Kingdom belong to the Queen.
- It is illegal to knock on someone's door and walk away.
- It is illegal to be drunk at a bar.
- If you annoy inhabitants by flying a kite, you'll be fined £500.
- If you need change and ask a stranger for some, it's considered begging.
- You cannot gamble, or use abusive or obscene language in a library.

- It is illegal to sing a profane or obscene song in public.
- It was once illegal for a woman to eat chocolate on public transport.
- Jumping the ticket queue on the Underground in London is illegal.
- Anyone breaking an egg on the sharp end could end up in the stocks for 24 hours.
- It is illegal to stand sockless within 100 yards of the Queen.

Go through the answers and then reveal that they are all true. Each of the above are, or were, laws in the UK!

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: a volunteer to perform the monologue below; appropriate costume (optional); Bibles

Gather the young people together and ask your volunteer to perform this monologue:

There he is, just look at him. Thinks he's got it all. Flash clothes, nice house. And all because of his sheep and goats. I lost count the last time I tried to work out how many he had. They are like locusts swarming across the countryside. I mean, I spend most of my time shooing them away from my crops. How am I supposed to keep my wheat and barley growing strong and healthy when all my time is kept herding his flock away? It's not fair and right. Why should he have it all so easy? I do my bit. I make my offering to God. I give what I can manage; after all, I don't have much, not like him – he gets all the breaks, the strong sheep, the goats that breed like rabbits. All I get is rabbits that breed like rabbits and then I have to chase them off my land too. Between the rabbit chasing and sheep herding, what time do I get for myself? I toil all the hours under the sun, and for what? Yeah, the sun, it is hot, and that doesn't help with my crops either. I know he has to take his flocks on long journeys to find water for them to drink, but it's still not fair. It's his fault my crops aren't growing.

It makes me so angry! Why should he get everything and I get nothing? So, so angry...

Get the group to read Genesis 4:1-16 to themselves. The issue here isn't about how to make an offering or sacrifice in order to be blessed, it is how Cain reacted. God still spoke to Cain. God told Cain that he could overcome and control his actions, but Cain rejected God's advice.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Have a discussion around the Bible story, and using the following question prompts:

- What do you think about Cain's actions?
- What could Cain have done differently?
- Did God reject Cain? Why?
- Are there times when anger gets the better of you?
- What are laws for and why do we have them?
- Who makes the rules?
- What is justice?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: felt-tip pens; paper; scissors

Give out the pens and paper and ask the young people to draw several simple sheep, goat and wheat outlines. Encourage them to colour them in and cut them out.

As they are doing this, ask them to think about issues where they need God's help to overcome situations where they might sin.

On each of the cut-outs they should write one word that represents the issues they have thought about. As these issues are personal, they can write words that are only obvious to them if they want to keep the matters private.

Let the group keep the cut-outs as a personal reminder that they should and can overcome any sin they are faced with. Be sensitive to what the young people are going through – some might feel that their situation is beyond God's help. Chat about how God was even-handed with Cain, even though his anger was such that he was contemplating murder.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Finish with a time of silent prayer, offering up to God our time and devotion and asking for a blessing in the lives of our community, families and our own lives.

DARREN HILL

tells stories at the creative minimalist:
darrenhill.com.