



SESSION 1 of 4

Creating the universe

MEETING AIM

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

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-13

BACKGROUND

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

5 CIRCLE TIME

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and invite them to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week and celebrate any birthdays or special events. 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?

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

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 or toys, or even to act out your opposites.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a screen and a 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 any 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 that you can move 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 attach these to a cane with tape. This is your land. Make some vine or beanstalk shapes in the same way.

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. Slowly move the pale blue 'flag' upwards and the dark downwards 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. Place them at the very bottom of the screen and move them upwards, as if they are growing. Some plants would make seeds to eat, some would grow fruit and they would all 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 hear it. Let the children retell the story themselves and operate the puppets if they are interested in doing so. Make sure they keep away from your light source, as it may be quite hot.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

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?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

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 flower-pots, or keep it simple with cress on cotton wool. The important thing is to talk with them about what plants need to grow properly, and how God created all the things they need. Talk about the way plants give food and shelter to us and the animals he created. Marvel at God's creation together.

Encourage each child to write their name on a sticky label and decorate it. They should then stick it on their pot ready to take home.

10 PRAYER

You will need: children's praise music and the means to play it; ribbons and flags; tambourines and other child-friendly musical instruments

Teach the children the actions to the prayer below. Practise them until the children are confident in what they are doing.

Read the prayer out to the children and encourage them to perform them at the right time:

Thank you, God, for the light (*hands up with fingers wiggling*) and the dark (*hands over your eyes*). For the sea (*make waves with your hands*) and the sky (*wave hands in the air*). The land (*hold hands flat*) and the plants (*raise hands*). Amen

XANA RIDLEY

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

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SESSION 2 of 4

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 follows on from Session 1 and completes the creation story in Genesis 1. 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 are also made by God (see Psalm 139). Children may not immediately see the impact of this, but you are laying the foundations for them to explore the idea further in the future.

Note: the 'Chatting together' questions are intentionally similar to Session 1. Children will enjoy the repetition (they will 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 also creative.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and invite them to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week and celebrate any birthdays or special events. Ask the children what their favourite animals are. Why do they like those particular creatures?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

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

To make the screen, stretch a white sheet across your space. Use any 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 have already done Session 1, use the same screen in this session.)

Tape the animal cut-outs onto the canes so 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 what it is. You can add sound effects if you aren't confident in your abilities.

5 BIBLE STORY

You will need: the screen and light source from 'Intro activity'; 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, and 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 and encourage the children to name as many as they can. Push the ends of the canes into the playdough to hold them upright if you run out of hands.* Then God made every kind of bird. *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 and small, crawling animals. *Display your animal puppets.* God saw that 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. *Display 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 hear it. Let them retell the story themselves and operate the puppets if they are interested in doing so. Make sure they keep away from your light source, as it may be quite hot.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

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 did next?
- Are you good at creating? What things do you like to make?
- How does it feel to know that people (and you) were made by God?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

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 by colouring, painting or sticking things to it. 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 them a person shape. Encourage the children to create self-portraits by decorating their person shape. As you work, talk about how we are all created by God. Comment on and celebrate the diversity of the self-portraits (and of the children in your group). Help the children reflect on what it might mean to be made by God.

5 PRAYER

Sit in a circle and take it in 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 can wave around as they thank God for it). 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.

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SESSION 3 of 4

Taking a rest

MEETING AIM

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

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 2:1-4

BACKGROUND

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. After all, 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. Select activities from the different sessions to create your own, but make sure you include elements from each.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and invite them to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week and celebrate any birthdays or special events. Ask the children what they like to do to relax. Do they take naps? Perhaps they like reading (or being read to), drawing, colouring or watching a TV programme. Talk about how we all need to rest, either through sleep or doing an activity we enjoy.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: balloons

Blow up a balloon and bat it to one another without letting it touch the ground. Make the game as energetic and lively as possible, though you could do it sitting at a table if you are tight on space. Have spare balloons ready in case one pops, and make sure you pick up any broken pieces straight away as they can be a choking hazard. Comment on the way 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 might be happier sitting with a helper at the side of the game.

5 BIBLE STORY

You will need: rugs; blankets; cushions; pillows; duvets; a child-friendly Bible or a 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, get everyone to 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, tell the story using a child-friendly version in 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.

The seventh day of the week 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 should be able to rest on a different day).

God knew that rest was very important, so he rested after finishing his amazing creation!

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

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?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: balloons or the equipment needed for your chosen game; the 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 'Intro activity' 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 the relaxing area you all made for 'Bible story'. Chat about how it feels to rest.

5 PRAYER

You will need: the 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 prayer: "Thank you, God, for teaching us how to rest. Amen."

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

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SESSION 4 of 4

Adam and Eve

MEETING AIM

To explore the idea that we are made in God's image, and created to be in relationship with him and each other.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 2:5-25

BACKGROUND

This session will help to lay the foundations for the idea that we are made in God's image and created 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 he wants us to be friends with him and with each other.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and invite them to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week and celebrate any birthdays or special events. Ask the children if they have a garden. What's it like? If they don't have a garden, is there a park near their house that they like? Or maybe they live in the countryside and there are beautiful rivers, fields or hills within walking distance. Chat about these things together.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a ball or soft toy

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

10 BIBLE STORY

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

To make the screen, stretch a white sheet across your space. Use any 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, 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. *Put one of your people puppets in the garden.*

The garden was very beautiful, and it was 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 or he would die. *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 and 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, so she became his wife.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

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?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

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

Give each child a lump of playdough and a mat (or put a tablecloth on the 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 these people. They can also think about how much joy their friends bring them.

5 PRAYER

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

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

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