



SESSION 1 of 4

Creation

MEETING AIM

To explore the wonder of the creation account.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-2:4

BACKGROUND

This is the first of four sessions dealing with the opening chapters of Genesis. Taken literally there are inconsistencies within the text, and when you try to compare these chapters with scientific data there are more contradictions. Yet, trying 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 consider the Bible to be important, what is *in* the Bible must be important. So what important things are these 'prehistory' passages conveying to our young people?

5 GATHERING TIME

Start by inviting the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. As they share, ask them specifically if they managed to achieve what they set out to do. Did they do what they had said they would do? Explain that today you will be looking at what happens when God sets about speaking.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

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

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

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

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

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

Ask the group to sit comfortably. Dim or turn off the lights, 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 ask someone to read the whole passage from Genesis 1:1 to 2:4.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Encourage discussion around the passage using the following questions:

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

15 CREATIVE RESPONSE

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

Make 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 God rested because everything was complete and finished. What images could 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 topics. What happened on each of the seven days? Can the group see any relationships between the days? Explain that days four, five and six directly relate to one, two and three, providing a wonderful symmetry. The completeness and wholeness and wonder of creation can be seen if we step back and see it as a whole.

5 PRAYER

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 doing so, thanking God for the heavens and the earth he created, and for what was created on each of the days.

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

Throughout this, and the next three sessions, encourage the young people to ask questions about these early chapters in Genesis. Although you don't want to get into a scientific debate in these sessions make it clear that if the young people are concerned or interested in an aspect, you will follow it up at a later time.

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SESSION 2 of 4

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 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 to 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 what the passage means than to try to fit everything together literally.

5 GATHERING TIME

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 perfect. Share that this week you will be looking at a seemingly perfect paradise.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: some magazines; pens and paper

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

Once they have done this, invite them to feed back 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?

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

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 breathe 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 more than that. They are important, yet you can't quite understand why."

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: "The trees are mentioned again. 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 meets all your needs."

Pause in verse 20, before it says that 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 me. 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 draw a tree, a river and a 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 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 with their own list from 'Intro activity'. What are the differences and what are the similarities?

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Encourage discussion around the Bible passage using these questions:

- Why did God create the trees in the middle of the garden if people weren't meant to go near them?
- How do you think Adam felt before God made him a companion? And afterwards?
- What might it have been like to walk with God in the garden?
- What does this story of creation tell us about God? And about 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 these can't be easily answered, make a note and tell the group you will find out and get back to them.

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: pens and paper

Give out the pens and paper, then 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 God had provided.

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

Once everyone has finished, share the poems or monologues with the rest of the group.

10 PRAYER

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

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

Ask the group to write their names on the leaf prayers and say that you will keep hold of them until the next session, when you will use them again. Explain that you will not look at them, and that you will keep them safe in a box.

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SESSION 3 of 4

The fall

MEETING AIM

To explore what happens when we turn from God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 3

BACKGROUND

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

5 GATHERING TIME

Welcome the young people and share out any refreshments you have brought with you. As they arrive, let them share about their week. If possible, look for any stories that may have happened when a public figure did something wrong (politicians are probably the easiest to find) and made an excuse for their actions. Include this in the discussion if appropriate.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

Split the young people into smaller groups or pairs. Give out the following scenarios 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, the group should vote on the best excuse given. You could even offer a small prize for the winner.

Situations:

- Your homework was not done
- You were late for your Saturday job
- You return home with a ripped jacket
- You didn't buy bread on the way home as you were supposed to

5 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: Bibles

Explain that today's Bible passage is the story of when Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. Before reading the passage, find out how much of the story they already know.

Get the group to stand up and ask what type of 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 that it was a fruit, so those with their right arms in the air can sit down.

As this exercise is about Adam and Eve doing something wrong, ask those who remain standing how many times the word 'sin' is 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 as though they're thinking about something. There is no mention of sin in the Garden of Eden; we have to wait until the next session with Cain and Abel for sin to get a mention. Anyone who wagged their finger should sit down.

Then ask those who are 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 as though they're balancing. If they're not sure they should put their hands on their chin as though they are pondering something. Even though the NIV and other Bible translations 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 who looks as though they're balancing should sit down. Congratulate those still standing!

Ask someone to read Genesis 3 at least twice. Then ask if the young people have 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 mentioned, apart from God, are the cherubim who guard the Tree of Life.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

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? Would you describe it as fair, harsh or loving?

- The previously innocent Adam and Eve now have to deal with the real world. They are free to choose, and free to face the consequences. How do we make choices? How do we face the consequences?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

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

On a large piece of paper draw the 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 the pair now have to deal with, what has changed and what the consequences are.

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

5 PRAYER

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

Hand out the leaf prayers 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 of their prayer of thanks, encourage the group to write words representing where they need or would like to be forgiven by God. Use the words below as a mediation while they do this.

We ask for forgiveness:
 For when we have run away;
 For when we have blamed someone else;
 For when we have blamed something else.
 Forgive us, for we have done something wrong.

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SESSION 4 of 4

Cain and Abel

MEETING AIM

To explore why we should not let sin control us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 4:1-16

BACKGROUND

There are always questions relating to Cain. Who did he marry after the events in this passage (Genesis 4:17)? Who were the people who might have wanted to kill Cain? We can only answer these through supposition and adding to the text. Again, as in 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, most likely through an increase in yield. Cain was warned not to let his anger control him.

5 GATHERING TIME

When the young people arrive, encourage them to share what has happened during the last week. If appropriate, you could ask if anyone has felt aggrieved by something or felt like justice hasn't been done. Be aware and sensitive of any issues the young people may be going through.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: paper and pens

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Read the 'laws' below out and ask the young people to write 'true' or 'false' for each one:

- All whales found in the UK 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 passengers or 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 at 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 is, or was, a law in the UK!

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

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. He 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're 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 spent herding his flock away? It's not fair or 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 and the goats that breed like rabbits. All I get is rabbits that breed like rabbits, then I have to chase them off my land as well. 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? The sun's 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 when I get nothing? I'm so, so angry...

Get the group to read Genesis 4:1-16 to themselves. Once they have read the passage, explain that the favour the passage talks about often related to an increase in crops. What appears to have happened was that Abel's flock increased while Cain's crops didn't do so well. For some reason, which is hinted at in Hebrews 11:4, Cain's offering didn't receive favour.

However, the issue here isn't about how to make an offering or sacrifice in order to be blessed, it is about how Cain reacted. God still spoke to Cain when Cain was angry. God told Cain that he could overcome and control his actions, but Cain rejected God's advice.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Have a discussion about the Bible story using the following questions as prompts:

- What do you think about Cain's actions?
- What could Cain have done differently?
- Did God reject Cain? Why do you think that?
- 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?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

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. Then encourage them to colour them in and cut them out.

As they are doing this, ask them to think about times when 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 them 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, as some may feel that their situation is beyond God's help. Chat about how God was with Cain even though his anger was so great that he was contemplating murder.

5 PRAYER

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

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