

1

God Made the World

Scripture

Genesis 1:1-25

Focus

God made the world beautiful and good and filled it with wonderful animals, fish, and birds.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Realize that God made all of the wonderful plants and creatures in our world.
- Name some favorite things God made.
- Praise God for our amazing world!

Reflection

This background is for you, the leader, and though it goes beyond what preschoolers can understand, let's spend a little time exploring how Christians read this crucial first chapter of the Bible today. While some Christians maintain that Genesis 1 and 2 are an historical record of a six-day creation that occurred approximately 10,000 years ago, many evangelical and Reformed interpreters differ with that view. Here are a few notes on our approach:

- Genesis was written in a prescientific culture that understood the earth as flat, covered with a solid dome, and built on pillars.
- Since the earth itself is also a revelation of God (see Belgic Confession, Art. 2) many Christians accept scientific evidence that the world is probably millions of years old and its creatures may have evolved over time.
- This chapter does not present a scientific or historical picture of exactly how creation came into being, but it does reveal crucial truths that science can never discover: that God created the world, that it was good, and that human beings have a special place in creation by being endowed with God's image.

To further explore these issues, you may be interested in reading the book *Origins: Christian Perspectives on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design* by Deborah and Loren Haarsma (Faith Alive Christian Resources).



Back to our story. Genesis opens with a dark brooding chaos; the Bible describes the earth as “formless and empty”—a dark chaotic void. When you describe this “nothingness” to preschoolers, you might compare it to an empty dark room full of scary shadows and creaking sounds. The creation story tells how God establishes order over that chaos. Every step of the way God is placing boundaries and assigning things to their proper place. Notice too how the Spirit (breath) of God is the agent of this ordering.

God's first act is to turn on the light in the dark and to establish time—day and night. Next God orders space, dividing the “water above” from the “water below,” and the water from the dry land. Then God takes the dry ground and creates plants to cover it with lush greenness. The ordering of creation goes on as God brings into being fish, birds, and animals.

Note how the Creator takes chaotic elements (night, waters, and seas) and gives them all a place in the order of creation. (By the way, this account completely rejects the idea common among Israel's neighbors that the sun, moon, and stars were divine beings. These things are great and wonderful, but are still merely parts of God's creation.)

A wonderful refrain marks each day: “And God saw that it was good.” Each part has its own place, its own beauty and goodness. And it's all to the glory of the Creator!

General Supplies

Each session of *Play* includes specific materials you'll need for teaching it, such as visuals filed under the leader's resources tab, printable pages, or props to use for telling the story. In addition, you'll want to keep a stash of the usual teaching supplies, such as drawing paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, safety scissors, glue sticks, and play dough. You'll also need a CD player or MP3 player and the CD that comes with this curriculum.










Wondering

- How do I understand this chapter in the light of modern science?
- Why does this chapter emphasize the ordering of the creation?
- Why do you think God created the world by speaking things into being?

Teaching

- Young children love repetition. Make the most of God's repeated response to each created wonder: it was good, very good.
- This session has a single, simple aim: to elicit wonder and praise from your group of preschoolers. Use every opportunity you have to point them to the amazing and beautiful plants and animals God has created for us to enjoy.

Session at a Glance

Steps	Time	Activity	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Step 1	10	Welcome Nametags Play dough	<input type="checkbox"/> Precut cardstock nametags <input type="checkbox"/> Yarn, stickers, markers <input type="checkbox"/> Box or basket to store nametags in <input type="checkbox"/> Play dough <input type="checkbox"/> Nature items	  
Step 2	15	Story Song	<input type="checkbox"/> Story pictures 1-6 (leader's resources) <input type="checkbox"/> Song: "That's Good!"	Aa  
Step 3	10-15	Pretending	<input type="checkbox"/> Song: "That's Good!" <input type="checkbox"/> Story pictures 1-6	 
Step 4	10-15	Nature walk	<input type="checkbox"/> Box or basket <input type="checkbox"/> Dear Family letter (printable page 1 or email version from www.dwellcurriculum.org), one per child <input type="checkbox"/> Show and Share cards, session 1	 

Step 1

Welcome the children as they arrive, and direct them to the table to make a nametag. As they pick out tags of their favorite color, write their names on the tags. Invite everyone to decorate their nametag with markers and stickers. Show the box or basket you'll use for collecting the tags and explain that each week you'd like everyone to find their tags here and put them on. (You might want to practice by having everyone place their tags in the box or basket, then mix the tags up and give each child a chance to find his or her own tag and put it on as you introduce the child to the group.)

Tip

Before class, cut 4" x 5" (10 x 12 cm) nametags from cardstock. Punch a hole in the top corners of each tag, then thread a 26" (66 cm) piece of yarn through the holes, securing it with a knot. Or, check out patterns 1-9 (printable pages 2-4) for some interesting nametag shapes that fit with today's story. Put the nametags on a table in your room, along with a supply of markers and decorative stickers.

Replace the supplies for making nametags with a big batch of play dough. Give each child a ball to squish, roll, and make into interesting shapes. Supply items from nature (twigs, leaves, stones, shells, and so forth) to make imprints in the dough. Encourage everyone to make simple shapes of fish, birds, or animals too. Promise the group a special story from the Bible about things they're making from play dough. Use your time to get to know the children and to tell them how glad you are that they've come today! Go around the circle again, saying each child's name and asking the group to repeat it.

Step 2

Move from the table to an area that you've set aside for telling the story each week. Gather your little ones around you and show them your Bible. Then teach them this simple rhyme that will serve as your story call each week:

This is the Bible, let's open it wide. (*hands together, palms up, like a book*)

Listen to God's story that's told inside! (*hands behind ears, listening*)

Ask everyone to find a comfortable way to sit (you might want to spread a big quilt on the floor and invite everyone to find a place on it) while you tell them a story from the Bible. Then use the story pictures for session 1 to tell the amazing story of creation. The story text is provided on the back of each picture.

When you've finished the story, wonder about it with the children, using one or more of these questions and leaving time for the children to answer:

- I wonder how God felt when he looked at the beautiful new world.
- I wonder which part of God's world is your favorite part.
- I wonder which color that God created is your favorite color.
- I wonder if you have a favorite animal or bird or fish that God created.

Follow up the story by listening to the song "That's Good!" (CD track 3). After listening to the song a time or two, invite the children to stand up and dance to it. Distribute the creation pictures you used to tell the story, and ask kids to hold them up and wave them as they move to the music.

Step 3

Step 3 of each session will offer the children a way to respond to the Bible story, often through *play*, as the title of this curriculum suggests. Today, give your little ones an opportunity to use their bodies to pretend to be some of the amazing and beautiful things God created for the world.

To start kids thinking, list a few things: stars, sun, trees, flowers (name some), birds (name some), fish, animals, and so forth. Go around your circle and ask each child to tell the group what he or she will pretend to be. Then play "That's Good!" (or some other lively music) and ask the children to use all of the space in your room to move to the music and act out their part of God's creation.

Or, if you'd prefer to focus the activity a bit more, make a masking tape circle on the floor, large enough for all of the children to fit inside with room to move around a bit. Gather the children on the outside of the circle and remark how empty it looks—just like the time before God began making things for the world. Ask the children to suggest something that God made for the world; when a child names something, everyone can jump inside the circle and pretend to be that amazing new thing God created to make the world beautiful and good. Step back outside your circle and ask the children to name something else that God created. Jump back inside together and pretend to be that flower or bird or animal. Continue until everyone has had at least one chance to make a suggestion for the group to act out.

Tip

If you'd prefer to make (rather than purchase) play dough, try this recipe: Mix together 4 cups of flour, 2 cups of salt, and 4 Tbsp of alum (available in the spice section of grocery stores). Add 4 ½ cups of boiling water, ⅓ cup of baby oil, and a few drops of food coloring. Mix ingredients together with a spoon until the dough is cool enough to knead with your hands. Store your play dough in an airtight container for use from week to week.

Faith Modeling

Preschoolers love to listen to stories. Telling Bible stories from your heart—and in your own words—is powerful! Prepare by immersing yourself in the story as told in Scripture and meditating on it until the wonder has captured your heart anew. Then you'll be ready to hold the attention of your little ones and communicate to them your own amazement at the story events and your own faith in our Creator God.

Tip

When doing any activity that calls for moving your bodies, children are much more likely to participate if you do it with them. Dress comfortably each week so you can actively participate with the kids, modeling the joy that comes with dance and movement. If there are children in your group who use a wheelchair or find it difficult to move, adjust the activity to include them.

End your activity by looking at the story pictures from step 2 again. Did you forget any of the parts of God's creation pictured there?

Step 4

Save time at the end of your session for a short walk outside to search for some of the wonders of God's world. Take a bag or basket with you to collect leaves, rocks, twigs, and other things you find. Look at the sky together—and watch for birds in the trees. Check out the plant life around your church too. Get on your knees and look for insects. You might see a squirrel or a chipmunk or a neighbor's dog or cat. As you walk, invite the children to tell you about their own pets.

When you get back to your room, gather the children in a circle around your collection of items from nature and praise God for everything you've discovered. Set up a display that you can look at together over the next few weeks. Give each child an opportunity to name something for which you can thank God together. With each item, repeat the following:

Leader: We praise you, God, for making _____.

Children: Thank you, God!

Before saying goodbye, help the children remove their nametags and place them in the nametag box for safekeeping until next time. Give each child a Show and Share card to take home and ask everyone to tell today's story about God to their families.

Easy Extras

1. Arrival Activity ☪ ✠

This activity can be used to expand step 1.

Time: 5-10 minutes

Materials: Songs: "Head, Shoulders, Knees, Toes" (CD track 1) and "If You're Happy" (CD track 2)

If you sense that your group needs more time to get used to church school and to each other, extend your opening step with some additional songs. Many of the children will come to your group already knowing these familiar favorites, so take all the time you need to sing and move and laugh together. Remind the children that church school is a fun place where everybody has a good time being together and learning about how much God loves us.

2. Creation Tracings/Rubbings

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: drawing paper, creation shapes (patterns 1-9, printable pages 2-4), crayons

Ahead of time, make creation shapes by cutting a few sets of patterns 1-9 from cardstock or posterboard. Distribute drawing paper, then ask the children to choose a creation shape and place it under his or her drawing paper. Demonstrate how to rub the side of a crayon (with the paper removed) over the drawing paper to reveal the shape underneath. (If you collected leaves on your walk outside, try using those instead of the paper shapes.) Add a caption to the children's pictures: THANK YOU, GOD FOR [whatever the child has illustrated].

Tip

If this is the first time that most of your little ones have come to church school, remember that they may be hesitant or even a bit frightened today. Some may refuse to participate in activities you've planned. Your gentle encouragement to watch rather than participate will show everyone that your room is a safe place. Soon even the shyest child will feel ready to be a part of each activity.

Re★formed

We know [God] by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe . . . like a beautiful book in which all creatures . . . are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God. . . . Second, God makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word (Belgic Confession, Art. 2).

Tip

If weather prohibits an outside walk, take one inside. Look out of the windows of your church and find things outside that God has created for our wonderful world. With paper and markers, list each thing you see in the sky or on the ground, making a simple line drawing of each one if you can. When you get back to your room, name each thing you saw and praise God for it together!

3. Game: “I Spy”

Time: 5-10 minutes

Materials: story pictures (leader’s resources)

Place the story picture, picture side up, in the center of your circle. Begin by saying, “I spy something God made that is . . .” (briefly describe one of the items on the story picture). Ask the children to call out the name or point to the answer on the appropriate picture. As they catch on, give them a chance to be the game leader too.

4. Game: Sock Ball Aa

Time: 5-10 minutes

Materials: clean sock

Make a sock ball by turning a sock inside out, folding it as you go. Gather the children in a circle on the floor and practice tossing the ball back and forth across the circle. Then explain that you’ll start the game by tossing the ball to a child across from you—who will name something that God made for our world. Shout together “Thank you, God, for _____!” as the child tosses the ball back to you. Continue tossing the ball and thanking God until every child has had a chance to name something God made.

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