



Stories on the Way: Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools

The Story of Creation Genesis 1:1-2:3

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The Story of Creation (*actions in italics*)

In the beginning, before there was an earth or a sky, a wind from God blew over the waters and everything was dark. Then God said, (*raise your arms as in prayer*) “Let there be light.” And there was light. And God said, (*one thumbs up*) “The light is good.” God separated the light from the darkness and he called the light Day and the darkness Night. And there was evening and morning – the first day.

Then God said, (*raise your arms*) “Let there be a dome to separate the water. The dome is called Sky.” And there was a sky. And God said, (*one thumbs up*) “The sky is good.” And there was evening and morning – the second day.

Then God said, (*raise your arms*) “Let the waters under the sky come together and let the dry land appear. The land is called Earth and the water is called Sea.” And there was earth and sea. And God said, (*one thumbs up*) “The earth and the sea are good.”

Then God said, (*raise your arms*) “Let the earth produce plants and trees.” And the earth was covered in every kind of plant and tree. And God said, (*one thumbs up*) “The plants and trees are good.” And there was evening and morning – the third day.

Then God said, (*raise your arms*) “Let there be lights in the sky to show the seasons and the days and to give light to the earth.” And God put the sun in the sky to light the day and the moon and stars in the sky to light the night. And God said, (*one thumbs up*) “The sun and the moon and the stars are good.” And there was evening and morning – the fourth day.

Then God said, (*raise your arms*) “Let the seas be full of living creatures and the sky be full of birds.” And there were fish and whales and turtles and eagles and sparrows and pigeons and seagulls and robins and every kind of sea creature and bird. And God said, (*one thumbs up*) “The sea creatures and the birds are good.” And God blessed them and said, (*one hand raised in blessing*) “Be healthy and have many babies so that you fill the sea and the sky.”

And there was evening and morning – the fifth day.

The God said, (*raise your arms*) “Let the earth be full of living creatures.” And there were cows and spiders and elephants and lizards and dogs and tigers and worms and moose and every kind of creature that lives on the land. And God said, (*one thumbs up*) “The land creatures are good.”

Then God said, (*raise your arms*) “Let there be people, made in my image, and let them take care of all the creatures in the sea and in the sky and on the land.” And God made people in God`s image. God made them male and female. Then God blessed them and said, (*one hand raised in blessing*) “Be healthy and have families. Fill the earth and take care of it. I have put you in charge of all the creatures and I have given you all the plants for food. I have given the plants to all the creatures for food.”

Then God looked at everything God had made and said,
“This is all very good”.(*two thumbs up*)
And there was evening and morning – the sixth day.

God had made everything – the sky and the earth and the sea and all the plants and animals and people – and, on the seventh day, God rested from all the work God had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it a special, holy day for resting and enjoying all the good things that were created.

(Genesis 1:1-2:3)

Creation in our own Backyard

(Creation Lesson 1)

This lesson begins with a brief discussion of why there are two creation stories in the Bible so, if you don't start with or use this lesson, you may want to refer to it in order to address that question during your lessons on creation.

Things to know about this lesson:

- the story is longer than usual BUT it is highly repetitive and has actions so it's easy to remember for both teachers and students
- the activity involves going outside and includes an option for doing some yard work as well as one without - or you can do both

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

Today, we are going to learn about one of the stories the Bible tells us about how God made the world. There are actually two stories about creation in the Bible, one right after the other, and they are actually pretty different. That can be confusing for people who might want to know which one is the right one. Well, they both are because they each teach us important and interesting things about God and God's plan for the world, including the people.

These stories are not science and they are not history– they are not trying to tell us what exactly happened the way a science report describes an experiment or a history book describes an event. These stories are about what the world means and about who God is and who we, as people, are. There are two of them because there are many, many ways to describe the world and God and people. The very wise people responsible for putting them together in the Bible – a long, long, long time ago - gave us two Creation stories to remind us of that.

But we only have a little time so we are going to focus on the first story. But before we begin, who can give me examples of things in creation (or nature, if the kids seem to need a definition)?

Take a few examples

Good. Listen to the story and notice when those different things were created. You can join me in the actions once you catch on to them, too.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

What did you notice in this story?

(e.g. God made stuff just by speaking. God thought it was all good. God got tired. God made

people in God's image.- don't worry about what they do or do not say at this point)

How did God feel about the things God made? (if that wasn't emphasized in the previous question's answers)

What did God make?

Help them remember the list:

- light
- sky
- earth and sea
- plants
- sun and moon and stars
- sea creatures and birds
- land animals
- people

Introduce the Activity

We are going to go outside into the wonderful Creation God made. While we're out there, we are going to:

Option A

take care of God's good creation by (e.g. picking up all the litter, weeding the garden, planting a tree, etc).

and/or Option B

find examples of each of the things God created. Don't pick anything or touch any animals – we just want to look at things. When we find an example, we'll pay attention to it for a moment and then we'll say thank you to God for God's good work.

The Activity (Going Outside)

If you have more than about 6 students or if your group is mostly older (10+), divide the group into groups of three or so. Give everyone clear directions regarding boundaries (no crossing roads, no leaving the property, no going out of sight, whatever is appropriate in your setting).

If doing **Option B**, let the kids take the lead in finding things to pray over and let them do the praying. If they are old enough, teach them a simple prayer of thanksgiving like the following or let younger ones (and quiet older ones) fill in the blanks:

Dear God, Thank you for the good work you did in making (the sun/this tree/etc.). Thank you for the (warmth and light/green leaves and strong trunk/etc.). Amen.

*Note: Don't forget to pray for the people God created!

If you can, take photos of this time outside and bring the prints back next week to post in the church.

Regrouping (inside or out)

Invite the kids to share what they prayed for and/or what they thought about the work they did. What did they like most? Least? Why?

Closing Prayer

Creator God, Thank you for the goodness of the world you made. Help us to pay attention to your creation every day and help us to always take good care of it. Amen.

Made in the Image of God (Creation Lesson 2)

If this is your first (or only) lesson on creation, have a quick look at *Creation in our own Backyard* if you want some help addressing the presence of two different creation stories in the Bible.

Things to know about this lesson:

- You will need to prepare materials in advance, including a very simple (I promise) picture. It's so simple you can probably do it Sunday morning just before the class starts. See the example on page 8.

Materials

- a prepared landscape, on one or two large pieces of paper (taped together if two)
- construction paper
- crayons/markers/pencil crayons
- scissors
- glue or tape

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

(If necessary, refer to the introduction for the Creation lesson plan, *Creation in our own Backyard* in order to explain the presence of two creation stories in the Bible.)

Before we begin the story, I have a question. What does God look like?

Let the group offer their thoughts but make sure following point is made clear:

No one knows what God looks like but we don't think that God has a body like we do or like other animals do. After all, God isn't an animal – or a plant or an object of any sort. The Bible describes God but not God's physical appearance. Instead, it tells us something about what God is like. For example, the story we are going to read today tells us that God is powerful and creative and that God likes the world that God made.

The story also tells us about people and that is the part we are going to focus on today. So pay close attention when we come to God's creation of people.

Join in on the actions once you know them.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

What does the story say about people? (made in God's image; male and female; they were very good; they were put in charge)

What do you think being "made in God's image" means? (not a physical description but a description about what we are like 'inside')

What does God do in this story? (creates, takes care of things, blesses things, likes creation)

Do you like to do those things? (*Help the students identify ways in which they are creative/caring/etc.*)

You do those things because you are made in God's image – made to be a little bit like God. Of course, we aren't as powerful as God so we can't actually make a tree – but we can plant one and help it grow or we can draw one or write a poem about one or sing a song about one.

Introduce the Activity

Today, we are going to illustrate the story. Everyone will create pictures of the different things God created and cut them out. Then, while I read the story, we will add them to this scene (*point out the prepared sheet of paper posted on a wall/easel*) at the right section until we have a picture as full as the world.

Distribute construction paper, pencils/crayons, and scissors. Ensure multiple representatives for each day of creation (except the 7th) are made – the students should make multiple little pictures each.

The Activity (Illustrating the Story)

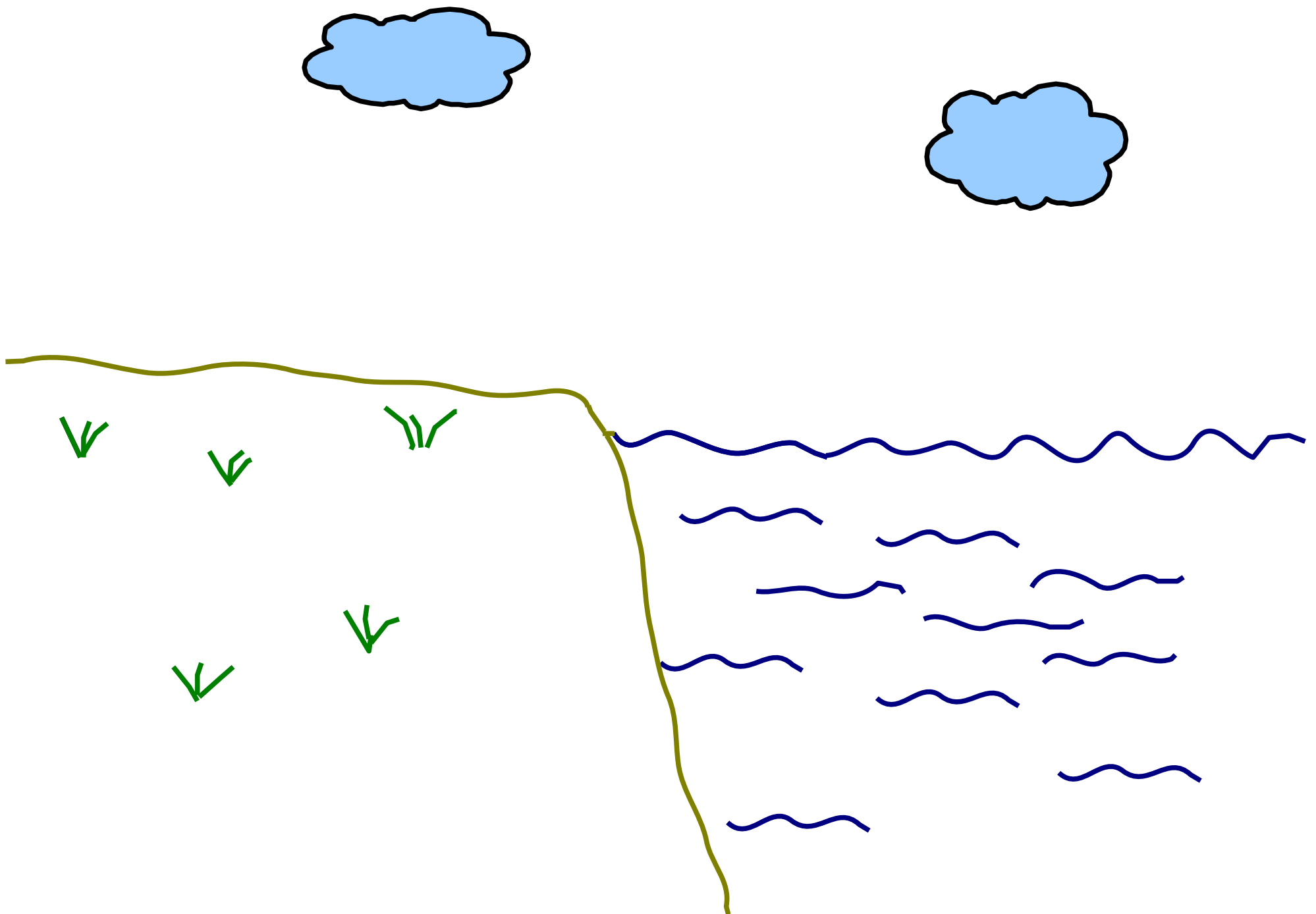
Once there are sufficient pictures, distribute glue sticks or pieces of tape and invite the students to add their pictures to the scene as you tell the story. Tell it slowly, leaving time after each day of creation for everyone to add all of their appropriate pictures and pronouncing it "Good" only once the day's additions are finished. Encourage everyone to join you in the praise.

Regrouping

When the story is done, take a few moments for thorough admiration of the finished picture. Thank everyone for their help in this small work of creation.

Closing Prayer

Creator God, thank you for making us in your image. Help us to use the gift of creativity wisely so that the things we make will always be very good in our sight and in yours. Amen.



And It Was Very Good (Creation Lesson 3)

This lesson deals with the reality that the world is not always good even though God created it that way and invites the students to consider how they can participate in God's vision for a world that is, indeed, Very Good.

Things to know about this lesson:

- You will need to cut out paper circles in advance. No big deal
- Paints would be really great for decorating said circles but, if you are not set up for paints, crayons/markers/pencil crayons will be just fine.

Materials

- two 8-10 inch circles of paper for each person (preferably from paper bags or kraft paper).
- paints (ideally) or crayons/markers/pencil crayons
- newspaper
- glue or stapler
- string (optional)

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

(If necessary, refer to the introduction for *Creation in our own Backyard* in order to explain the presence of two creation stories in the Bible.)

Ask the students questions such as the following (but don't let the conversation take too long:

- What is your favourite animal?
- What kind of weather do you like best?
- Do you like forests or mountains or beaches or prairies best? Why?
- Do you like silly, noisy people? Quiet people? People who like to play board games or play sports or have long conversations or read books?

Conclude the discussion by saying:

God likes all those things – and everything else in creation, too. Pay attention to the story and you'll see just what God thinks about the world God made. Join in on the actions!

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

How does the story say God felt about the things God made? (they were good; very good)

Do you think that everything is still very good? Or are there things in the world that are not good?

If kids propose elements like mosquitoes or poisonous creatures or earthquakes, acknowledge that somethings can be annoying or even dangerous but that they are part of creation, too. If no one offers such ills as hungry people or pollution, say something like:

God put the humans in charge and told them to take care of everything on earth. But we have not always done a good job of that and we have caused many problems. Can you think of some problems? (provide examples, if necessary, and keep note of the problems that identified)

If they do offer human-made problems, ask:

Who did God put in charge of taking care of creation?

Have we always done a good job?

Do you think God thinks that (e.g. hunger and pollution) are good?

Can you think of some ways that we can help make the problems better? (For example:

- hunger – don't waste food; give to food banks
- pollution – don't litter; recycle; take the bus
- loneliness – smile at people; talk to kids who don't have many friends at school
- violence – don't hit your brothers/sisters/friend)

Conclude the discussion with something like:

God still thinks that creation – including people – are good and are worth loving. God wants us to do a better job of taking care of each other and all of creation – and God will be there to help us do our part.

Introduce the Activity

Who knows the saying “I dropped the ball”? Can anyone tell me what it means? (It means to do something wrong or to not do something that you were supposed to do, especially when other people are counting on you to do it. It comes from sports like football where you are not supposed to drop the ball.)

We humans have dropped the ball on taking care of God's creation, including other people.

Did you know that the earth is shaped like a ball? Today, we are going to make earth balls to take home and remind us to not drop the ball of God's creation.

Making “Earth Balls”

Distribute two circles to each person and put out the crayons/markers/paints. Instruct the students to decorate one side of each circle so it looks like the earth – green land and blue water. Reassure them that it does not have to be accurate – just draw green continents and blue oceans and, maybe, white polar caps. (You may want a globe or map available for those with higher ambitions.)

Once the circles are decorated, glue (or staple) them together around the edges with the decorated sides facing out, leaving 5 inches unglued.

While the glue is drying, have the students crumple up small pieces of newspaper. Once it is dry, stuff the newspaper into the balls and then glue the gap shut.

Optional: Staple (or glue) a string to the balls so they can be hung up.

Regrouping

Invite each student to name something they will try to do to take better care of God’s creation.

Closing Prayer

Creator God, thank you for making such a good world. Forgive us for dropping the ball and not taking care of it like we should. Help us and all humanity to do better in the future. Amen.