

STORY PART 1: The God Who Gives Life

Module 1 Lesson 1—God Breathes His Life into Humanity—Genesis 1:1—2:1

This small group resource has been created for elementary (grades 1-3) and preteen (grades 4-6).

INTRODUCTION

Supplies

- Lesson Teaching Symbol: The earth as viewed from space and items needed to display symbol
- Elementary and Preteen Student Handout 1: Narrative Story
- Elementary and Preteen Student Handout 2: Visual Lesson Symbol
- Parent Handout: Provided at the conclusion of this lesson
- Copier and paper
- Highlighters (one per student)
- Markers
- Pens and writing paper (one of each per student)
- Module 1 Song, opt.
- Outdoor area for prayer walk

Objectives

- Familiarize the students with the Bible and the God of the Bible.
- Help students connect biblical truth to daily living.
- Assist students in developing spiritual practices for ongoing Christian formation.
- Facilitate critical thinking in relation to spiritual formation.
- Actively engage students in the mission of God.

Suggested Text or Email for Follow-up

This can be sent to parents and students (with parental approval) following your session.

All of earth and everything in it is created by God. God did it, just as He said He would. How does it change our attitudes and feelings toward others when we remember that God breathed His life into all of us? What are three ways we can enjoy and celebrate God's beautiful creation?

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Genesis 1-11 serves as an introduction not only to the book of Genesis but to the entire Pentateuch as well. They prepare the stage for both the coming of the covenant or law at Sinai and the narrative of Abraham and his descendants. The first chapter of Genesis sets up the major character in the story that is about to unfold—God the Creator. This would be a strong contrast to the pantheistic religions of Moses' day.

Two primary themes dominate the creation account: the **land** and the **blessing** (the pronouncing of it as good). These two themes are important not only here but in the Sinai covenant as well and reoccur throughout the Pentateuch.

When we look at the first two chapters of Genesis, we tend to break them into separate narratives. However, this misses some very important continuities and themes. The challenge is to break away from sections divided by chapter and verse. After all, these denotations were a later addition in the history of the Bible.

Three distinctive sections or sub-narratives emerge when we view the two chapters as one: 1:1 stands alone as the overall introduction to the narrative, 1:2—2:3 gives the days of creation, and 2:4-25 tells the story of man and woman prior to the fall.

Genesis 1:1 assumes the existence of God for it is He who in the beginning creates. It assumes His eternity for He is before all things, and since nothing comes from nothing, He himself must have always been. It implies His omnipotence for He creates the universe. It implies His absolute freedom for He begins a new course of action, and it implies His infinite wisdom.

The creation narrative that unfolds in the first two chapters has a non-linear movement. Despite the fact that the middle section is linear in the movement from day to day, there occurs a jumping or zooming in and out of the narrative. The produced effect is that the creation of the “heavens and earth” in verse 1 is an out-of-focus view which is focused on in the subsequent sections. Likewise, the creation of land and vegetation in verse 11 comes more into focus in chapter 2. Understanding this zooming in and out of focus allows for more continuity between parts that are often seen as incongruent or contradictory with other sections of the narrative.

Ultimately, we find the creation account in the first two chapters of Genesis showing us that God, the Creator of the universe, has prepared the earth (land) as a dwelling place for His special creation (humanity) and this Creator has a plan to bless all of His creation.

PART 1: NARRATIVE (THE BIBLE STORY)

Supplies

- Visual Symbol, lesson 1
- Items needed for symbol display

What to Do

Display the visual symbol. This symbol will help students to connect with the Bible story as it is told. Each time it is seen, it will serve as a reminder to students of the narrative Bible story that was experienced for this lesson.

You can print and display the symbol. You can also use a computer and projector to display the symbol for a large group.

I want you to listen closely to this Bible story. It is the beginning of creation, God's creation. As you listen, you may also study this picture. What is it? What does it have to do with this Bible story? And how can it help you to remember the creation account told here today? *(Pause and then tell the story.)*

God was before all things, and God created all things. When the earth was not yet formed, there was nothing but God. This is the way God made the earth and all things. God said, "Let there be light" and as God spoke, it happened. God surveyed the light and saw that it was good, just as God had planned. Then He separated the light from the darkness. God named the light "day" and the darkness "night." This was the first day.

God then spoke into the nothingness and said, "Let there be a vast expanse of space and air above and one of water below." As God said this, it happened. The sky and all above was separated from the waters below. God named the space above "sky." This was the second day.

God then said, "Let the waters below come together so that dry ground may appear," and as God spoke, it happened. God named the dry ground "land." It was just as God had planned, and it was good. God said, "Let the land sprout with all types of plants. Each of these plants will produce its kind." Again, as God spoke, it all happened. From the land sprang forth all types of vegetation and trees. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. God surveyed the land and all the plants, and it was just as God had planned. It was good. This was the third day.

God said, "Let there be lights in the sky. These lights will mark the seasons, days and years. Let these lights shine down on the land." As God spoke, all of this was created. God surveyed the sun, moon and stars, and it was just as God had planned. It was good. This was the fourth day.

God said, "Let the waters swim with fish and other life. Let the sky be filled with birds of every kind." As God spoke, it happened. This was the fifth day.

God then said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of its own kind." As God spoke, it happened. God created all the animals of the land—livestock and wild animals of all types. God surveyed all of this, and it was just as God had planned. It was good.

God then said, “Let us make human beings in our image to be similar to us. They will reign over all the fish, birds, livestock and wild animals.” And as God spoke, people were made in the image of God. God created man and woman to be similar to God. God then blessed the man and woman and said, “Go have many children and fill the earth with people. Govern the earth and all the animals, birds and fish. Look at the plants. See the seeds and fruit! I have given them as food for you to eat.”

God then surveyed all of creation and saw that it was just as He had planned. It was very good! This was the sixth day.

God rested on the seventh day because all of creation was complete. God blessed the seventh day as a day of rest and declared it holy.

PART 2: TEACHING AND REFLECTION

Narrative Review—*All Grades*

Supplies

- Elementary and Preteen Handout 1
- Highlighter (one per student)

What to Do

Give each student a copy of the narrative story handout and a highlighter. Have the students reread the narrative. Have them highlight the word “God” every time it appears. You may want to reread the narrative for younger students. You can ask volunteers to help reread the narrative when teaching preteens.

1st–3rd Grade Reflective Questions

Use these questions for review and reflection. You will also want to allow students to bring their own questions and reflections into the discussion.

1. How many times did you find the word “God?” (40 times)
2. What are some action words or verbs that you notice in the passage?
3. Who seems to be doing all of the action?
4. On which days did God survey or look over what He had made?
5. How many days did God create or work?
 - a. What is the importance of the seventh day of rest?
6. What was the final act of creation?
7. What does it mean to be made like God but not be God?

4th–6th Grade Reflective Questions

Use these questions for review and reflection. You will also want to allow students to bring their own questions and reflections into the discussion. As you see, most of the questions are the same for each age level. You will notice a different level of thought in the preteen responses. Encourage this deeper thinking skill.

1. How many times did you find the word “God?” (40 times)
2. What are some action words or verbs that you notice in the passage?
3. Who seems to be doing all of the action?
4. How many days did God create or work?
 - a. What is the importance of the seventh day of rest?
 - b. Do any of the days seem similar or is there a pattern?

General		Specific	
<i>Day 1</i>	<i>Light</i>	<i>Day 4</i>	<i>Sun, moon, stars seasons, days, years</i>
<i>Day 2</i>	<i>Sky and water</i>	<i>Day 5</i>	<i>Filled the sky and water</i>
<i>Day 3</i>	<i>Land and vegetation</i>	<i>Day 6</i>	<i>Filled the land and gave vegetation as food</i>

5. What is special about the sixth day?
 - a. What is different about the creation of animals versus the creation of human beings?
 - b. What does it mean that we are like God but not God?

Reflective Thoughts—All Grades

Supplies

- Elementary and Preteen Handout 2
- Markers

What to Do

Give each student a copy of Handout 2. Allow them to choose the marker color or colors they would like to work with. Say to the students, “As we talk about and reflect on this narrative story, I would like you to add a color, design, or word to your symbol each time I pause and say, ‘Reflect.’”

God created all that has ever been created. God was not created. Indeed, He was before time, which is almost too amazing to consider. Today’s story is out of Genesis 1:1—2:1. In this passage, we learn about the beginning of all things. Nothing is outside God’s creation except God himself. He is the Almighty God. *(Pause, and then say)* **Reflect.** *(Allow a few minutes for students to work. Gauge this time and move on as students complete their work.)*

Notice how God took great care and effort in the creation. It is as if each day builds upon the previous to prepare for the final act of creation—human beings. At the very beginning of the Bible, we can already see how much God loves us. He went to great lengths or great effort and work to make everything perfect for us. Then, when He finished, He looked it all over and said it was good, which means just as He had planned it. There is an order and purpose to all of life, and all of life matters. *(Pause, and then say)* **Reflect.**

If people say life here on earth just happened, that it is some cosmic fluke or the result of some random event, how does that affect the way we view people or the sense of a life that continues after death? *(Pause, and then say)* **Reflect.**

Does it change the way we act, the way we treat the world and others, when we remember that God created all things, including people? *(Pause, and then say)* **Reflect.**

Take home this visual symbol and consider the creation story throughout the next week.

PART 3: DEEPER STILL

Spiritual Practices

Supplies

- Pen and paper (one per student)

What to Do

Give each student a pen and piece of paper for journaling.

Read Psalm 139:13 or ask a volunteer to do so.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” We know that God created the first human beings, but sometimes we forget that God used the same love when He created each one of us. He carefully created us just the way He wanted us. That doesn’t mean we are perfect, but we were

made in a way that we can be used completely and perfectly for His good purposes.

One your paper, respond to the following by journaling,

1. What does it mean to be created so carefully by a loving God? Close your eyes and think about this question and how you feel about God’s creative work.
2. Have you ever wanted to be different than the way you are? Describe that or draw it. Silently thank God that He didn’t make any mistakes when He created you.
3. Is there any time you are tempted to forget that those around you were handcrafted by the God of the universe? Yes, that includes the bully at school and the kid everybody avoids at recess. How might remembering that God created all people in His image affect your behavior? Describe that or draw it.

PART 4: PRAYER

Option: Download and play the song for Module 1 to prepare the students for this time of focused prayer.

If possible, at the conclusion of this lesson, take the students outside on a prayer walk. As they walk around, have them thank God for the various parts of creation they see, including the people around them.

If this is not possible, have the students sit in a circle and encourage each to share a favorite part of God’s creation. Conclude in sentence prayers, thanking God for the various parts of creation mentioned, include people.

Remember to send home the parent communication on the next page of this lesson.

AT A GLANCE

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Family Conversation Starter

'All of earth and everything in it is created by God.' God did it, just as He said He would. Describe how you feel about God's power. How can knowing this change our attitudes and feelings toward others when we remember that God breathed His life into all of us? What are three ways we can enjoy and celebrate God's beautiful creation?

A Family Blessing

As you spend time in family devotions this week, try this idea. Have each family member sit with and place hands on the head, arm, or shoulder of each of the other family members. Encourage every family member to say something that is valued in every other family member. For example, mom can say to child, "I really value how creative you are. I love to hear you use the beautiful voice that God created just for you." When everyone has shared, pray together, thanking God for blessing your family and for each member.

REFLECT

Your child participated in a time of reflection during this lesson. Have your child share the visual symbol of the earth with you and talk about what happened in the lesson time. Here is a snapshot of the reflection. You might consider using it at home with your entire family.

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Does it change the way we act, the way we treat the world and others, when we remember that God created all things, including people? *(Pause, and then say)* **Reflect.**