

Session Plan Overview

Faith Link. This statement provides direction and focus for the session.

At-A-Glance. This chart lists all the materials needed for the session.

The Story. Provides engaging ways to share the Bible story and involve youth in the telling. Youth read directly from the Bible.

Teaching Tip. Youth group have bodies that are changing dramatically. Or, they are often changing and wonder why they are not. Both boys and girls often struggle with body image. This session affirms the goodness of God's creation. They like the way of creation, are good in God's eyes. This session can also provide youth with a spiritual basis for the important task of caring for creation.

Dig In. Questions for reflection and discussion that help youth dig deeper into the Bible story and see it in new ways.

Words to Live By. Engaging activities and discussion prompts to help youth explore the meaning of the Bible memory passage.

Teaching Tips. Identify challenges and gifts that the Bible story has for youth and give developmental information to guide you as you worship and learn together. Found on multiple pages.

Empower. Send youth into the world with a challenge, scriptural benediction, or prayer.

Connect to Each Other. The session begins with welcome activities that help youth get to know each other and build relationships.

Care Notes. Space for writing observations, notes for other teachers, and prayer concerns for youth and their families.

Session 1 August 30, 2026

God Creates

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Story Summary

The Genesis creation song begins with the wind and voice of God. God separated light from dark, earth from sky, and water from dry land. God spoke into being plants of every kind and the sun and moon to rule the day. God created a multitude of fish, birds, and other animals. Finally, humans were created in God's image. God saw that all of creation was very good. On the seventh day, God rested.

Faith Link

God celebrates the goodness of creation.

At-a-Glance	Shine Materials	Supplies
Prepare Ready your heart to lead youth in worship and learning.	• Bible essay and reflection questions (p. 8)	• Bible
Connect Guide youth in building relationships with each other and with God.	• Ignite Devotional (teacher's copy) • Psalm 139 Teaching Poster	• Bible • Beach ball • Permanent marker • Internet-connected device (optional)
Encounter Immerse youth in the Bible story. Discover ways it relates to their lives.	• See supply lists on Explore page. • Session 1 "Your Turn" Card • "Who's Your Turn?" Card	• Bibles
Explore Immerse youth in the Bible story with a variety of activities.	• Ignite Devotional or Flipbook Access Cards (one per youth)	• Bibles
Empower Send youth into the world with a challenge.		

The Ignite Devotional is a resource for junior youth to use at home. The devotional's content is connected to the Bible stories in this unit. Simple, daily prompts guide youth as they engage with scripture, connect with each other, and connect with God. **Digital teaching aids** include Flipbook Access Cards to facilitate access to the responsive in a Flipbook via a QR code.

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Prepare. A Bible essay, reflection questions, and a prayer support the teacher in session preparation and personal spiritual growth.

Reflect

Call to mind documents, books, photographs, and your personal experiences with creation. What part of creation—plants, animals, weather, geographical features—do you like best? What do you like least?

In what way do you or can you "find awe" over creation for its beauty?

Think about the youth you will serve. As you name to them, use the **Cardnotes** sidebar to note how you see the image of God reflected in each one.

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Prepare God Creates Genesis 1:1-2:3

There is not one, but two separate creation stories in Genesis, each chosen to address the two basic questions we ask about the universe: Why is the world as good? And why is the world as awful? This first creation story answers the first question with a simple answer: Because God made the world.

The creation story in today's text is not concerned with how much time it took, but how God created an orderly universe. As a matter of fact, the earth was already present, in chaotic form, when God began to bring it into order. The Hebrew word *tohu*, used in Genesis for "formless," is not about making things but creating order, like the difference between building a house versus making it a home.

There are many differences between Genesis and the creation stories of other ancient religions. For instance, in other ancient religions we learn how a god was born or created. Our God's existence is taken for granted.

In some ancient religions there is a battle between the gods and the forces of chaos, with the outcome still in doubt. But in Genesis, the Spirit of God moves over the face of the deep and is confronted by formless and void, words that recalled the primordial Chaos that buffeted Orion in Canaanite mythology. And what happens?

There is no light. Instead, God speaks, chases darkness, things appear, and God pronounces them good. Rhythmically over seven days, God makes the earth his home, light and dark, sun, moon, and stars, and only help us know where to plant and harvest, but mark holidays to glorify our hours. Plants and animals are brought to life. On the sixth day God creates human beings, who will "hold sway" over the natural world.

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So, thanks to Genesis, we learn this world is our home, created for our well-being, and that all of us bear the image of God. All creation is good, for we are very good.

Thank you, creating God, for the wonders that surround us. Thank you for our sun, moon, and stars, and for the plants and animals that surround us. For the rivers, lakes, for the people who share our lives, and for the friends we meet, the friends you made and whom you love. Amen.

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Connect to God. Music and prayer practices provide ways for youth to connect with God and cultivate the inner life of the Spirit.

Media Connections. Books, art, music, websites, or other resources that can be used to extend and enhance the session.

Connect To Each Other

Before the session, prepare a beach ball for this activity. Using a permanent marker, write a question related to today's theme, God Creates, on each section of the ball. The questions should focus on things that are personal and unique to everyone. What is your favorite part of God's creation? What do you most enjoy doing outside in creation? What is your favorite animal? What setting in nature helps you feel peaceful or close to God?

When everyone is seated, divide the group into pairs or triads. Have everyone stand or sit in a circle. Take turns gently tossing the beach ball across the circle. Before the game begins, indicate a specific finger (left pinky, left pinky, left pinky). When someone catches the ball, they answer the question written in the section that finger is touching. Keep playing until everyone has had a chance to answer a question.

To God

If possible, go outside. Tell the group that sometimes just being outside in God's creation can renew our spirits, invite youth to get comfortable, close their eyes, and take several deep breaths. Gently ask them to focus on what they hear. After a minute or so, tell them to focus on what they smell and feel. Then ask them to open their eyes and focus on what they see. What parts of the natural world did they notice most? Even if they heard or saw things like cars and planes?

If going outside is not an option, look at pictures of nature or listen to nature sounds videos. Choose pictures or videos that show large habitats like a rainforest, ocean, or desert, so they can imagine a larger view of creation and understand the connection between all things. See Media Connections for ideas. Have youth silently reflect about the complexity and beauty of God's creation. After a few minutes, read Psalm 146 as a prayer.

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MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Art	Seven Days of Creation by Susan M. Jensen
Music	Let There Be Light by The City Harmonic; "Beautiful Thing" by Gungah; "The Beauty of the Earth" by Naima (all on YouTube)
Videos	"Creation Chronicles Creation Series" by MennoniteMedia Inc.; "Amazing Planet South: Beautiful World Changing, Powerful Planet Rising" through Green Planet; "The Power of Nature" by Underworld World of the Sea; "4K: Rejuvenation with Calming Music" by H&M; "Part 4" by Dr. Alexander; "10:10 Hours of Healing from Earth's Impact" by Science by BBC Earth (all on YouTube)

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Explore. Activities that encourage youth to process and respond to the Bible story.

Explore

Link

As a group, watch the "Creation Chronicles Creation Series" videos listed in Media Connections. After the videos, facilitate a discussion using the following questions:

- Sometimes, hearing or seeing a recording of a familiar story makes us see it in a new way or notice something we didn't before. What did you notice about this recording of the creation story? What stood out to you?
- What do you think about this portrayal of God and God's attitude toward creation?
- In what ways did this video make you think about God or the creation story differently?

Supplies

- Art kit supplies (crayons, markers, colored pencils, play dough, paint, paper)
- Internet-connected device

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Respond

Link

You can see God's artistic touch in creation—inspired moments, vibrant sunsets, intricate mountains, delicate flowers. As beings created in God's image, we have inherited God's creativity. Encourage the youth to follow in God's footsteps to be "creative." Provide several mediums with which youth can create and urge them to make something that is inspired by something in God's creation, perhaps something they saw or experienced outside earlier in the session.

Supplies

- Art kit supplies (crayons, markers, colored pencils, play dough, paint, paper)
- Student Paper 1A
- Pencils or pens

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Make Peace

Today's scripture tells us that God cares about creation and called all of "good." In disciplines, we are called to live in peace with God's creation and care for it. Unfortunately, the human race has a long history of showing disrespect towards creation, from pollution and deforestation to overconsumption and wastefulness.

Either as a group, in pairs, or individually, have youth use Student Paper 1A to brainstorm how they can care for or show their appreciation for each element of God's creation.

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YOUR TURN

Tell the youth it's "your turn" to lead the group. Decide together about how the group will determine who will lead this session each week (ask for a volunteer, draw a name from a bowl, and so on). Choose a facilitator and give them the Session 1 "Your Turn" Card. Have them choose one of the options on the card and facilitate the activity or discussion with the group.

This week's "Your Turn" options include Respond and Collaborate. You will need to provide beads or stones and markers for the Respond activity and digital cameras for Collaborate. You also have two "Your Turn" Cards in the teaching kit. Feel free to allow youth to choose one of those if they do not like the options on the session-specific card.

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Empower

Close the session by leading the students in praying the words of Psalm 136:1-14. Write the words on a chalkboard or whiteboard. Have students look up the scripture in their Bibles or hand out slips of paper with the verses written or typed on them for the students to read. Have the group read the prayer aloud together to close the session.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works that I know very well.

—Psalm 136:1-14 (NRSV)

Send home the Ignite Devotional or a Flipbook Access Card (one per youth)

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