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.

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 set the sun and moon to rule the sky. 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 children in worship and learning.	• Bible essay and reflection questions (p. 6)	• Bible
Gather Guide children in getting to know friends, God, and a Bible verse.	• Fall 2026 Playlist • Psalm 139 Teaching Poster • "Sing and Praise!" Teaching Poster	• Supplies for At the Table • Internet-connected device • Rhythm instruments
Share the Story Immerse children in the Bible story. Discover ways it relates to their lives.	• Teacher's Storybook	• Bible • Blue cloth • Green cloth • Plant and animal figures (including land and ocean animals)
Responsive Play Go deeper into the Bible story with a choice of activities.	• See supply lists on Responsive Play page.	• See supply lists on Responsive Play page.
Bless Send children into the world with a blessing.	• *God's Good Creation Family Storybooks* **or** Flipbook Access Cards (one per child).	

God's Good Creation Family Storybook contains this unit's Bible stories for children to read at home. Each book also contains songs, prayers, and activities families can do together. **Digital teaching kits** include Flipbook Access Cards so families can access the storybook in a flipbook via a QR code.

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

At the Table. The session begins with welcome activities that help children get to know each other and build relationships.

CareNotes. Space for writing observations, notes for other teachers, and prayer concerns for children and their families.

Reflect

Call to mind documentaries, books, photographs, and your personal experience 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 "hold sway" over creation for its benefit?

Think about the children you will serve. As you come to know them, use the CareNotes sidebar to note how you see the image of God reflected in each one.

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 so good? And why is the world so 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 crafted an orderly universe. As a matter of fact, the earth was already present, in chaotic form, when God began to shape it into its present state. The Hebrew word *bara*, used in Genesis for "create" 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 deeps and is confronted by Formless and Void, words that recalled the primordial Chaos that battled Order in Canaanite mythology. And what happens?

There is no battle. Instead, God speaks, chaos dissolves, things appear, and God pronounces them good. Rhythmically over seven days God makes the earth our home. Light and dark, sun, moon, and stars, not only help us know when to plant and harvest, but mark holidays to gladden our hearts. Plants and animals are brought to life. On the sixth day God creates human beings, who will "hold sway" over the natural world.

The Hebrew word *radah* implies not so much "rule" as "responsibility" and "accountability." In other ancient religions only the ruler bears the image of the gods, but in Genesis the image of God is seen in *all* humans. And in contrast to the rest of creation, God pronounces us "very good."

Finally, on the seventh day, God rests. In the ancient world some thought God's people wasted a seventh of their life by resting on the Sabbath, but God's example of resting on the seventh day allows us to prioritize self-care as essential for well-being.

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, and we are very good!

Thank you, creating God, for the wonders that surround us. Thank you for the sun, moon, and stars, for the plants and animals that surround us, for the endless skies, for the people who share our lives, and for those we have not met, but whom you made and whom you love. Amen.

Gather

At the Table

Welcome the children by singing "God Loves Us All the Time" to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell." Greet each child by name, waving to each child who is mentioned. Sing the song until everyone has been greeted.

God loves us all the time! (*Hug yourself.*)
God loves us all the time! (*Hug yourself.*)
Hello, _____! Wave hello! (*Say the name of a child and wave to them.*)
God loves us all the time! (*Hug yourself.*)

Eat a snack that is shaped like animals, such as animal crackers, or make simple shapes like fish out of dry cereal pieces as you eat them. Talk about how amazing animals are, how many legs they have, and what sounds they make while you eat together.

Learn a Verse

Show children the Psalm 139 Teaching Poster. Point to each word as you read the verse one time. Then lift your hands up high and say the words together, a few words at a time.

I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me.
—Psalm 139:14a (CEV)

Sing and Pray

Look at the children on the "Sing and Praise!" Teaching Poster together. Look for the percussion instruments—a drum and a tambourine. Sing "If You're Ready to Sing Praises" to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It." Use your hands as percussion instruments as you sing and praise God.

If you're ready to sing praises, clap your hands!
If you're ready to sing praises, clap your hands!
If you're ready to sing praises
to the God of all who made us,
if you're ready to sing praises, clap your hands!

Try different motions after "clap your hands," such as "stomp your feet" or "raise your hands."

Sing "Hip, Hip, Hooray" from the Fall 2026 Playlist, using rhythm instruments to make music as you sing.

Say a prayer and thank God for each child by name.

CareNotes

Take note of children's responses and needs, who's missing, and things to remember.

Teaching Tips

▸ At the Table is the time to gather and welcome children into your space. You may need to adjust the order of activities to do what works best for your group. Create a welcoming environment by having one or two standard activities available as children arrive, such as blocks, coloring sheets, or play dough. Engaging in these activities can be a calming way for children to manage separation from their parents and help them wait for others to arrive.

▸ Consider asking families to complete an Allergy Notification Form for their child. Shine has a customizable form available at www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras.

▸ Use the CareNotes section to jot down notes that will help you plan future sessions and respond to the needs of individual children. You might take note of activities that were especially engaging for this group or an activity that connected with a particular child. Include the names of new children or regular attenders who were absent. Share your notes with other teachers who will lead this group and refer to the notes as you pray for the children and their families.

Bible Story. A biblically faithful retelling of the Bible story that includes interactive elements, such as props, repeated lines, and motions, to keep young children actively engaged.

I Wonder. Questions that help children imagine themselves in the story and connect it to their own experiences.

Learn a Verse. Engaging activities help children explore and practice the Bible memory verse.

Sing and Pray. Music and prayer practices provide ways for children to connect with God.

Teaching Tips. Identify challenges and gifts that the Bible story has for young children and give developmental information to guide you as you teach and worship with children. Found on multiple pages.

Illustration by Erin Bennet Banks

God Creates
Genesis 1:1–2:3

Teaching Tip

▸ Use simple motions to help bring the story to life. Children may mirror the motions and feel the story in their bodies. Notice how children respond to the story as you share it. Rephrase the story in your own words and shorten the story if needed to share the main idea in a brief way. If your group is very active, you may find that they learn best when they are handling materials, such as in the Re-play activity. An activity like this one allows you to start conversations about the story.

Share the Story

Get Ready

Open a Bible to Genesis 1 and show children where today's story is located. Say:

This story comes from the Bible.
It is a story of God's love.

Open the Teacher's Storybook. Find the illustration for session 1 then fold the book along the spine. Read the Bible story on the page that follows the illustration while the children look at the illustration.

Bible Story

A long time ago, God made the whole world.

The first day, God made light. The light was good! (*Spread your arms out wide.*)

The second day, God made clouds in the sky and water in the sea. (*Make wave motions with your arms.*) The clouds and the water were good!

The third day, God made plants with food to eat, like apples and oranges. (*Pretend to pick fruit from a tree.*) The plants were good!

The fourth day, God made the sun, moon, and stars in the sky. (*Form a circle with your arms.*) The sun, moon, and stars were good!

The fifth day, God made fish to live in the water. (*Put your hands together and move them like a wriggling fish.*) God made birds to live in the air. (*Stretch your arms like wings.*) The fish and birds were good!

The sixth day, God made many animals to live on the land, wild animals, tame animals, and reptiles. (*Put four fingers on the floor and "walk" them like a land animal.*) The animals were good!

God made people. God said they would have children and take care of the world. They would eat food that grew. Everything God made was very good! (*Stretch your arms out to the sides.*)

God was happy with the world. On the seventh day, God rested. (*Place your hands together and lay your head on your hands.*)

I Wonder . . .

Pause after the story, and then thoughtfully share these questions. Pause briefly after each question, giving time for children to reflect and connect to the story in their own way.

- I wonder how bright the first light was.
- Imagine a sky full of colorful birds. Imagine water with many fish in it.
- I wonder which animal you like best.
- I wonder how the people took care of the world.
- I wonder what you like best about this story.

Re-play

Place a green cloth and a blue cloth on the floor or on a table. Place plant and animal figures on these cloths, remembering how God made these amazing creations. Put fish and ocean animal figures on the blue cloth and land animal figures on the green cloth. Invite children to play with the figures and tell the story in their own words.

READ, WATCH, LISTEN

Art	*Coral Reef* by Olga Nikitina
Book	*The Color of Me* by Linda L. McDunn
Music	"God Makes Everything" by Rain for Roots; "Ps & Gs Caring for Creation - Kids for Creation" by Ps & Gs Church (both on YouTube)
Video	"Creation (Genesis 1–2)" by Saddleback Kids (YouTube)

Teaching Tips

▸ Throughout the unit notice the interests of the children in your group and plan accordingly. For example, if children enjoy working with play dough or building with blocks, incorporate those activities more often. Modify activities as needed to match the energy and interests of the group.

▸ Always use "Read, Watch, Listen" suggestions as a starting point; they come from a variety of sources and perspectives. Media suggestions are posted on the Shine: *Living in God's Light* Pinterest page for ease of use. Look for the "Fall 2026" board.

▸ When playing active games, start with calmer motions, become more energetic, and then slow the movement down in the end. End the Responsive Play (Move) activity with calm and quiet motions to help children settle their bodies and minds for the next activity.

▸ Make sure you have one copy of the *God's Good Creation Family Storybook* or a Flipbook Access Card (Digital Teaching Kit) to hand to each child at the end of this session. Encourage them to read the storybook at home with their family.

Re-play. Activities that allow children to experience the story through play.

Read, Watch, Listen. Books, art, music, websites, or other resources that can be used to extend and enhance the session.

Responsive Play. Four exploration activities that help children to process and respond to the Bible story.

Bless. A scriptural benediction or prayer of blessing to offer at the close of the session.

Responsive Play

Create

Make a night sky and ocean picture. Lay out a large piece of dark blue or black paper. Have children dip their fingertips in finger paint and press on the paper to create yellow or white "stars." Draw waves on the paper using blue markers. Use finger paint to add fish in the ocean. Alternatively, have children add star stickers or fish stickers to the paper.

Supplies
❒ Large piece of dark blue or black paper
❒ Finger paint
❒ Blue markers
❒ Water
❒ Soap
❒ Drop cloths
❒ Star and fish stickers (optional)

Move

God created animals that move in different ways. Create a path on the floor by placing two jump ropes side by side or using masking tape to create lines. Invite children to move along the path as they pretend to be various animals God made. Use the list below or use the Movement Cards found on page 46 in this guide.

- Scuttle like crabs
- Hop like kangaroos
- Flap like birds
- Crawl like earthworms
- Swim like fish
- Stalk like lions

Add sounds to praise God like animals do. Tweet like birds or roar like lions to add a fun element to this activity.

Supplies
❒ Movement Cards (p. 46)
❒ Jump ropes or masking tape

Discover

God made the moon and stars! Draw a circle on a piece of black paper with a white pencil or a white crayon to create a moon. Mix 1 cup / 250 ml warm water and 1 cup / 220 g Epsom salt. Use cotton swabs to apply the water and salt mixture onto the circle and notice the interesting texture it leaves behind. Children can complete Student Page 1B.

Supplies
❒ Student Page 1B
❒ 1 cup / 250 ml warm water
❒ 1 cup / 220 g Epsom salt
❒ Bowl and spoon
❒ Black paper
❒ White pencils or white crayons
❒ Cotton swabs

Explore

Celebrate God's wonderful creation by creating a nature center. Gather some real leaves, branches, and flowers for children to explore. Have children look through magnifying glasses to investigate the nature items. Younger children can complete Student Page 1A.

Supplies
❒ Student Page 1A
❒ Leaves
❒ Branches
❒ Flowers
❒ Magnifying glasses
❒ Crayons

Bless

Take a moment to bless each child before they leave. Say the words of blessing as you give each child a high five.

God made you, _____ (*child's name*)!

Send home the *God's Good Creation Family Storybooks* or a Flipbook Access Card (one per child) and any Student Pages, crafts, or projects