

united CREATION kingdom

The Kingdom story from creation to revelation

CREATION

(NLT with some passages from *The Message*)

Genesis 1:1-4

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth – *everything you can see, and everything you can't see*. The earth was *an inky blackness and covered in water*. And the Spirit of God was hovering *like a bird* over the surface of the waters. Then God *spoke, and when He did, He said*, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then He separated the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:6-25

Then God *spoke, and He ...* made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. God called the space “sky.” Then God said, “Let the waters ... flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” ... Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation – *that* will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. Then God said, “Let lights appear ... *and* God made two great lights – the larger one *for* the day, and the smaller one *for* the night. He also made the stars. ... Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind” ... each producing offspring of the same kind. Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind – livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” ... And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, “Let us make human beings *to be like us*. ... So God created *people – man and woman – and patterned them after Himself* ...

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17

God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person. Then ... God planted a garden ... and there He placed the man He had made. ... In the middle of the garden He placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ... God placed the man in the Garden ... to tend and watch over it. But ... God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden – except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

Genesis 2:18, 21-23, 25

Then ... God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ... So ... God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept ... God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then ... God made a woman from the rib, and He brought her to the man. “At last!” the man exclaimed. “*She has flesh and bones like me!*” ... Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

Genesis 1:28, 31

Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and *take care of it*. *Be in charge of* the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.” ... Then God looked over all He had made, and He saw that it was very good!

Genesis 2:1-3

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ... God had finished His work of creation, so He rested from all his work. And God blessed the *next* day and *set it apart as special*, because it was the day when He rested from all His work of creation.

TELLING THE STORY

Why this story?

God creates everything just by speaking it into existence. But one of His creations is different. He fashions people Himself – and patterned after Himself. He makes them to be in relationship with Him. The entire creation is excellent in every way, and God's relationship with people is good and perfect.

This story describes creation as it was meant to be – good. It sets up relationship with God as it was meant to be – good and personal. There cannot be a concept of a fall or of evil if there is not a concept of a perfect place or relationship from which it has fallen. God wants a relationship with man – in fact, He created people in a special way and to have a good relationship with Him and with each other. He loves people, as is evidenced in the way He made them.

Key concepts to include in your story

- **In the beginning, God...** Set the scene for the audience in an interesting way and introduce the story by saying that God created everything.
- God spoke everything into existence, but He formed man in a more involved way.
- People (men and women) are patterned after God.
- God's creation was good and was formed to reproduce.
- There were two trees in the middle of the garden, and Adam was told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- God created the world for us and for us to take care of.
- God finished his work and set the last day apart as a special day set aside for Himself.

Notes about how the story was crafted

The first and second chapters of Genesis are two accounts of the creation of the world told from different perspectives. As such, we have pulled different things from each of them and have combined them into a story that continues to follow the chronology of events even though the Bible verses may seem out of order.

The order of the spoken creation is not as important to the story as the difference shown in the way God created man. You may try to tell the story with a logical sequence, but don't worry if you don't get everything in the correct order. It is not the purpose of this story to teach people the order of creation, but to help them see how it was created, and how God specially made people.

A few words have been replaced in this written version to give you examples of ways to tell the story using conversational language. For example, when talking about the sun and moon being created to govern the day and night, we have replaced **to govern** with **the larger one for the day, and the smaller one for the night**, because **to govern** is usually not used in ordinary speech in the same way as it appears in the biblical text.

We have omitted references to the days of creation, in order to avoid distraction from the key concepts in the story. It is not as important that the listener believe that the earth was created in six literal days as it is that he/she understands that the earth was created by a sovereign, all-powerful, loving, relational God.

We have replaced **in our own image** with **like us** or **patterned after God** in an attempt to make the language more clear. (See the "questions people may have" section below for more information about this.)

In Genesis 1:26 God says “Let **us** make human beings in our own image.” Commentators are unclear as to whether this 1st-person plural refers to the Trinity or to a royal plural. (The “royal plural” is when a royal personage uses the plural form of the pronoun when referring to himself in order to show dignity and majesty.) We know that all parts of the Trinity were present at creation, so it is not beyond the realm of possibility that this phrase refers to that fact. If your audience is composed of new believers or non-believers, you may choose to represent the pronoun in the singular to avoid confusion or distraction from the main concepts in the story.

We have omitted the name of the garden in order to make the story easier to retell for someone unfamiliar with the Bible.

Neither Adam nor Eve is named in the story. It is unclear in the Bible when the word for “man” and “woman” actually becomes their names, so it can be unclear in our story as well. God did not name Adam and Eve, but you can use their names or say something like *the man, who was called Adam...* If you feel that your audience would not like hearing a story about “Adam and Eve” or that they would feel like they already know the story if you say the names, then you can leave them as the “man and woman.”

DISCUSSION POINTS

Retelling the story

- As your group practices retelling this story, help them see the different scenes in this story. The transition points that can act as scene shift markers are in **red**.
 - Creation of the world
But then God did something different...
 - Creation of people in God’s image and with a good relationship with God
 - Formation of Adam and a warning to him **Something wasn’t good...**
 - God creates a helper for the man **God said that it was all good...**
 - God finishes his creation and sets apart a special day
- Although for the purposes of this story it’s not necessary to get the order of creation perfect, it may help your group to think of creation in terms of “containers.” Three containers – the sky, the sea, and the land (including vegetation) – were created in that order. Then each container was filled in turn – the sky was filled with the sun, moon and stars, the sea (and sky) were filled with fish and birds and the land was filled with animals.
- You may choose to show a PowerPoint or short video showing creation, perhaps in the order it was created, to go along with the story and Scripture and to show variety in creation.
- For some groups it may enrich their experience to see photos of the variety of God’s creation, either on a computer screen or in books.

Questions for discussion

You don’t have to ask all of these questions in your discussion times. These questions are discussion starters, but you will find that often, once people feel comfortable, they talk about many of these things naturally. However, these questions are helpful to keep a conversation going where needed, and they provide a logical sequence of working through the story. Even if you don’t ask all the questions in a group, try to ask people what this story means for them personally. You’ll find that as you continue to interact with God’s Word at a deep level, God’s Spirit will reveal things for your life in a wonderful way!

- What do you like about this story?
- What bothered you about this story?
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about people?

- What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- How will you remember this story? (*Tell it!*)
- Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to? Or anyone you would like to practice with? E.g. Your children, your best friend, your wife, your husband, a mum at the school gate, your work colleague, your neighbour. (It's true that the best way to learn a story is to tell it. So why don't you give it a go and chat to each other next week about how you found it?)
- How does this story contribute to our understanding of the Gospel? How is this story part of the Gospel?

Questions people may have

This section can never be exhaustive. Remember that during your group discussion times, you want to focus on the above questions rather than get sidetracked by deeply academic issues. Part of the joy of experiencing and studying God's Word in this way is allowing God's Spirit to teach us and reveal His truth to us through the narrative of the individual stories, and ultimately through the narrative of the larger story line. However, we understand that sometimes people feel they need some deeper answers. Sometimes, the storyline has to speak for itself, and we have to trust it to do so. However, if your group needs some deeper answers in order to go on, here are some basics that you can discuss. If you have unresolved questions, please come and ask, and we'll help you find the answers.

- What does it mean to be "patterned after God"?
 - *The Hebrew word for image (selem) is used in the Old Testament in several different contexts, sometimes referring to a representation or model of something (1 Samuel 6:5, 11), an unsubstantial reality such as a dream (Ps. 73:20), or most commonly as an idolatrous image (Num. 33:52, 2 Kings 11:18). In neighbouring ethnic groups the king or a high-ranking official was considered to be "in the image of God," but a lowly worker wasn't. This phrase in Genesis may be a way of saying that all mankind is in fact royal, true children of God. This idea of "sonship" is further suggested in Genesis 5, when the comment that God created people in His image is immediately followed by Adam's genealogy. It's clear from this passage and others (c.f. 1 Cor. 11:7, James 3:9) that the "image" continues even after the disobedience in Genesis 3. In any case, we should not focus on solely one aspect of a human being (e.g. the physical, relational, etc) when we speak of image. A human being is a unity, and it's no one part of him/her that is made in "God's image." What we do know is that **image** refers to some sort of resemblance, probably in some form both physical and spiritual. Our story's interpretation of **image of God** should not say more than the text states, so it should also remain ambiguous. TEV translates this: "They will be like us and resemble us."*
- Why wasn't God enough for Adam and Eve? Why did they want more?
 - *This jumps to the next story, but most people know the next story. You may respond by saying that we'll explore it more next time when we learn that story. The next story's discussion may centre on why Eve chose to eat the fruit, and you'll find that when you tell the 2nd story, some of those questions are answered.*
- Were Adam and Eve initially perfect?
 - *It depends on your definition of "perfect." If "perfect" means without fault, that's possible. If "perfect" means without the capability of having a fault, then no. What we know about Adam and Eve is that they were "excellent in every way." We know that they had the capability of doing evil. We know that death had not entered into the world yet, so presumably neither had sickness.*
- Why did the tree of the knowledge of good and evil have to be in the middle of the garden?
 - *There is no easy answer for this question, and some of the traditional responses may not satisfy. The traditional response to this is that God provided us with free will – the ability to choose to obey Him or not, because He wanted a mutual relationship with us rather than one of slave/master.*
 - *Without the presence of the possibility of evil, there is no real understanding of "good."*
 - *This story emphasizes God's original good relationship with people, and that relationship should continue to be stressed.*
 - *Hopefully, this story begins to show God's love for His creation and especially for people. Even when we don't have all the answers, we do know that the Creator God loves us and made us especially for a relationship with Him.*

- How exactly did creation happen? (e.g. Did the water flow up to make the sky?)
 - *The “simple” answer to this is that we don’t know! We do know that much of biblical creation’s chronology coincides with science’s chronology of the beginnings of life on earth. Remember that the first chapter of Genesis was poetic in Hebrew, and was not meant to be a fully scientific description of creation. The second chapter was meant to emphasize the relationship between God and people. What this textual structure does tell us is that God wanted to emphasize relationship with people more than the scientific details.*
- Marriage and the law of the land: God’s desire is for us to live with Him, and for a man and woman to be in a stable life. How do we talk to people about these things? (e.g. What is marriage?)
 - *God created male and female, and both were created in His “image” (see Gen. 1:27). One of the functions of people is to reproduce, and that reproduction is a blessing from God (see Gen. 1:28). The differing role of males and females in sexuality is designed and willed by God.*

CREATION – for children

(NCV with some passages from the NLT and The Message)

Genesis 1:1-4

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth – *everything you can see, and everything you can't see*. The earth was empty and covered in water. ... And God's Spirit was moving over the water. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, so he divided the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:6-25

Then God said, "Let there be something to divide the water in two." So God made the air and placed some of the water above the air and some below it. God named the air "sky." ... Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered together so the dry land will appear." ... Then God said, "Let the earth produce plants – some to make grain for seeds and others to make fruit with seeds in them. Every seed will produce more of its own kind of plant." And it happened. ... Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky to separate day from night." ... He also made the stars. God put all these in the sky ... to separate the light from the darkness. ... Then God said, "Let the water be filled with living things, and let birds fly in the air above the earth." ... Then God said, "Let the earth be filled with animals, each producing more of its own kind. Let there be tame animals and small crawling animals and wild animals, and let each produce more of its kind." And it happened.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let us make human beings *to be like us* ... So God created *people – man and woman* – in His image.

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17

Then ... God took dust from the ground and formed a man from it. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nose, and the man became a living person. Then ... God planted a garden ... and put the man he had formed into it. ... In the middle of the garden, God put the tree that gives life and also the tree that gives the knowledge of good and evil. ... God put the man in the garden ... to care for it and work it. ... God commanded him, "You may eat the fruit from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat the fruit from the tree which gives the knowledge of good and evil. If you ever eat fruit from that tree, you will die!"

Genesis 2:18, 21-23, 25

Then ... God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him." ... So ... God caused the man to sleep very deeply, and while he was asleep, God removed one of the man's ribs. ... God used the rib from the man to make a woman, and then he brought the woman to the man. And the man said, "Now, this is someone whose bones came from my bones, whose body came from my body." ... The man and his wife were naked, but they were not ashamed.

Genesis 1:28, 31

God blessed them and said, "Have many children and grow in number. Fill the earth and *take care of it. Be in charge of* the fish in the sea, ... the birds in the sky and ... every living thing that moves on the earth." ... Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

Genesis 2:1-3

So the sky, the earth, and all that filled them were finished. ... God finished the work He had been doing, so He rested from all His work. God blessed the *next* day and made it a holy day, because on that day he rested from all the work he had done in creating the world.

TELLING THE STORY – for children

Key concepts to include in your story

All Scriptures for children are taken from the New Century Version unless otherwise noted. The New Century Version has been chosen, because it is not an adult Bible packaged for children. It has been translated directly from the original texts into English with short sentences and simple, modern vocabulary that can be read and understood by children – specifically directed toward those aged between 6 and 12.

The story will need to be simplified at varying levels based on the age group of the children you are teaching. This means that many of the details in the story will need to be summarized. However, you should include the following concepts in your story.

- **In the beginning, God...** Set the scene for the audience in an interesting way and introduce the story by saying that God created everything.
- God spoke everything into existence, but He formed man in a more involved way.
- People (men and women) are patterned after God.
- God's creation was good and was formed to reproduce.
- There were two trees in the middle of the garden, and Adam was told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- God created the world for us and for us to take care of.
- God finished his work and set the last day apart as a special day set aside for Himself.

Example of a simplified version of the story for children

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth – everything you can see, and everything you can't see. The earth was completely empty. Then God spoke, and the sky and the sea and the land were created. Even trees and plants were created. Then God spoke again, and He created the sun, the moon and the stars. Then God spoke and created fish and birds and animals – little animals that crawl and wild animals. God had created the whole world so that plants and animals would even produce more plants and animals. Everything that God created was good. Then God did something different. God created people in His image. God took dust from the ground and formed a man from it. Then He breathed into the man's nose, and the man became a living person. Then God planted a garden and put the man in it to care for the garden. He told the man that he could eat fruit from any tree in the garden except from the tree that gives the knowledge of good and evil. If the man ate the fruit from that tree then he would die. Then God saw that Adam needed a helper. So God caused the man to fall asleep, and He removed one of the man's ribs. God used that rib to make a woman. The man liked the woman, and God blessed them. God told them to have many children and take care of the earth and everything in it. Then God looked at everything He had made and said it was very good. Because God finished the work He had been doing, He took a day to rest. God blessed that day and made it a special day since that was the day He rested from all His work.

Retelling the story

The following activities can be used to vary your storying sessions with the children and keep the action fresh and exciting. They also help the children learn the stories in different ways. You'll find as children journey through this story set with you, they become more and more capable of learning even complicated stories quickly and well. Varying activities and keeping it fun helps the children write the stories on their heart so that they can pull them out of their toolbox whenever a situation comes up where they can use them!

- **Charades** – Have participants choose one line from the story and use actions to convey that line to the rest of the group. The child that guesses correctly goes next.
- **Skit** – Assign parts to groups and have them act out the story as you or a participant narrates. This can be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, you may choose to have each team act out the whole story, or assign sections and have them perform the skits in chronological order one after the other.
- **Song** – This activity seems to work best in small groups of older and more advanced students. If you believe your group would enjoy this activity, have them write and perform a song based on a story or a portion of a story. To make this task easier, have each group choose a song melody as their foundation and change the lyrics as needed, as opposed to starting from scratch.
- **Sign Language** – This is a great way to incorporate kinaesthetic learning into storying. Work with the participants to develop "sign language" for keywords in the story. This will help them to remember the order and progression of the story. This activity may also be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, have a participant from each team narrate as the group demonstrates their motions. The more creative, the more likely they are to remember it! Sign language is a good activity if younger and more inexperienced storytellers are part of the group.
- **Perspective Shift** – This creative and critical thinking activity works best later in the story set. Assign groups of children different characters in the story. They then adjust the story they have learned to the perspective of that character. For example, they could tell the Fall story from Adam and Eve's perspectives or the Abraham story from Abraham's perspective.
- **Memory** – The storyteller starts this activity by saying the first line of the story. The story then moves around the circle as each participant tells a line. An alternate method is to go back and forth between partners as they tell the story to each other.
- **Popcorn** – The storyteller also starts this activity. As children remember, they raise their hand. When ready, the storyteller yells "pop" and the name of someone with their hand raised. That person will then jump in until more hands are raised and they shout "pop" to pass the story to another child. You will likely need to demonstrate how this works.
- **Interview** – Children are assigned different characters. A child designated as "interviewer" asks the characters questions about what happened in the story and the character answers according to his or her role. For example, the interviewer could ask Adam about what he witnessed or the actions he took in the garden when he ate the fruit, and Adam would give his answer.
- **Action words** – Before telling the story, the storyteller gives instructions associated with particular words. Children listen for those words in the story, and must do appropriate action when heard. For example, the storyteller would tell the participants to wiggle their arm like a snake anytime they hear the word "snake." There should be multiple words associated with actions in the story. This activity also works well with a younger audience.

Children's Teaching Materials

Sunday mornings will begin in the warehouse with a joint children's worship time led by a youth worship band followed by a storying session with the roving storyteller. Then groups will disperse to their usual meeting locations for the age-appropriate teaching of the story and activities that reinforce that story's message.

Sparks

10:30	Retell the story. Use a Storybook Bible, and point to things that God made as those items are mentioned.	Resources Needed: • Storybook Bible • Rice cakes
	Snack – rice cakes	
10:45	Craft: Things God made	• Paper: white, blue and brown • Stickers: flowers, trees, stars, planets, animals and people
	Play	
11:15	Music: "My God is So Big" & others	• Develop a CD with 3-4 songs to be used weekly
11:20	Play	

Little Flames

10:30	Begin with prayer. (Don't repeat a specific prayer, but follow the general idea of the prayer below.) ~ Say "Hi" to God, tell Him we're glad He's there with us and ask Him to help us see Him, hear Him and know Him. Invite Him into everything we'll be doing today.	Resources Needed:
	Keep today's focus in mind: "God made me to be His friend."	
10:35	Retell the story together multiple times. Start with "God was here." Use a combination of flannel board and Little People methods where possible. Use a storyboard method – allowing children to voluntarily blue-tac on the different elements of creation as the leader retells the story. Pass out the various elements. The children can jump up and bring theirs as they hear it in the story. As each child puts his/her bit on, he/she could tell the story in simple terms: "God made light!" "God made birds!" etc. As a Grand Finale, each child – one by one – can gather in the front of the storyboard to proclaim, "God made me!"	• Blank black poster board (for storyboard) • Pictures or objects representing different elements of creation
10:45	"Knowledge Harvest" conversation: (use similar questions as below) ~ What are some things God made? ~ What are some plants God made? ~ What are some animals God made? ~ What are some sparkly things God made? ~ Can you point to anything in this room that God made?	

10:50	"Adam Names the Animals" – Animal Charades ~ Have the quietest, shyest kids (in turn) to be Adam ~ Everyone else chooses their favourite animal and acts it out for Adam to guess/name.	
10:55	Biscuit break – Use this relatively calm opportunity for a little chat and prayer time. Discussion: "What's your favourite thing that God made?" ~ Reflect back to them that God made this whole world as a home for us, to delight us, because He loves us. For example, Amy knows God loves her, because God made broccoli. She can say, "Thank you, Jesus, for broccoli" – knowing that God made it, because He loves her.	• Biscuits
11:00	Popcorn Prayer ~ Have simple prayers, popcorn style: "Thank you, Jesus, for _____!"	
11:05	Activity: Pretend Play ~ Allow the children to use Play-dough to make whatever they want. Suggest that they can also make a "best friend" and playfully breathe it alive as God truly breathed us into being. ~ Leaders can play-act with the children. Have the children lie still on the floor while leaders play-act shaping them into uprightness and breathing life into them. Let them come to life with all their vibrancy and variety, and invite them to be themselves – as boisterous as they please. Perhaps use music as a soundtrack while this is happening.	• Play-dough • Music
11:15	Sing: Choose one or two songs – perhaps "My God is so Big."	• Music
11:20	Learn the words of the week: "God made me to be His friend." Use visuals for the kids to help them learn the words. (These can be written words even though they can't read yet.)	• Visuals to help learn the phrase
11:25	Wonder Questions: Think about how God made us to be His friends ~ "Friends have fun together. What are some fun things you like to do with your friends? I wonder what fun things we could do with God?" ~ Discuss how delighted God would be to join these children in doing things God made them to absolutely love doing.	
11:30	If there is any remaining time (or the previous activities finish early), allow the children to freely choose to do whatever they want to do. Play story-relevant music in the background. Leaders should engage with the children during this time: celebrate them, pray for them, love them. ~ Play with story-oriented toys ~ Role play ~ Play-dough creations ~ Breathe-to-life game ~ Colouring station ~ Treasure box of nature treasures to play with	• Story-oriented toys • Play-dough • Nature-celebrating colouring sheets • Blank paper • Crayons • Treasure box with nature treasures (shells, conkers, photos of nature, etc)

Resources Needed:

10:35 Welcome and straight-forward telling of the story

10:45 Retell the story using sequencing

Discuss the questions:

~ What do you like about this story?

~ What bothered you about this story?

~ What does this story show you about God?

~ What does this story show you about people?

~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?

~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*

~ Who will you tell this story to?

- Whiteboard and markers
- Pictures

11:00 Game: "What's the time, Father God?"
(Is it time to make the stars/plants? Is it rest time? Is it free time?)

11:15 Craft: Creation Wheel

- Patterns
- Brass paper fasteners (brads)
- Crayons

11:25 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

- Container for the offering

Resources Needed:

10:30 Retell the story

10:40 Act out the story with props

- Blue cloth
- Items to illustrate creation (such as leaves, stars, etc)

10:55 Split into groups and have the leaders retell the story
Have the children help retell the story

Discuss the questions:

~ What do you like about this story?

~ What bothered you about this story?

~ What does this story show you about God?

~ What does this story show you about people?

~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?

~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*

~ Who will you tell this story to?

Pray for who they want to share the story with

11:15 In groups – use Plasticine or Play-dough to create the Garden of Eden

- Plasticine or Play-dough
- Paper plates

11:30 (As they leave) Activity pages

- Word search
- Colouring pages