

STORY HOUR

An Evangelistic Program
for Preschool and Kindergarten Children



YEAR ONE

Downloadable Edition



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Faith Alive Christian Resources
1700 28th St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407

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Illustrations by Christina D. Schofield

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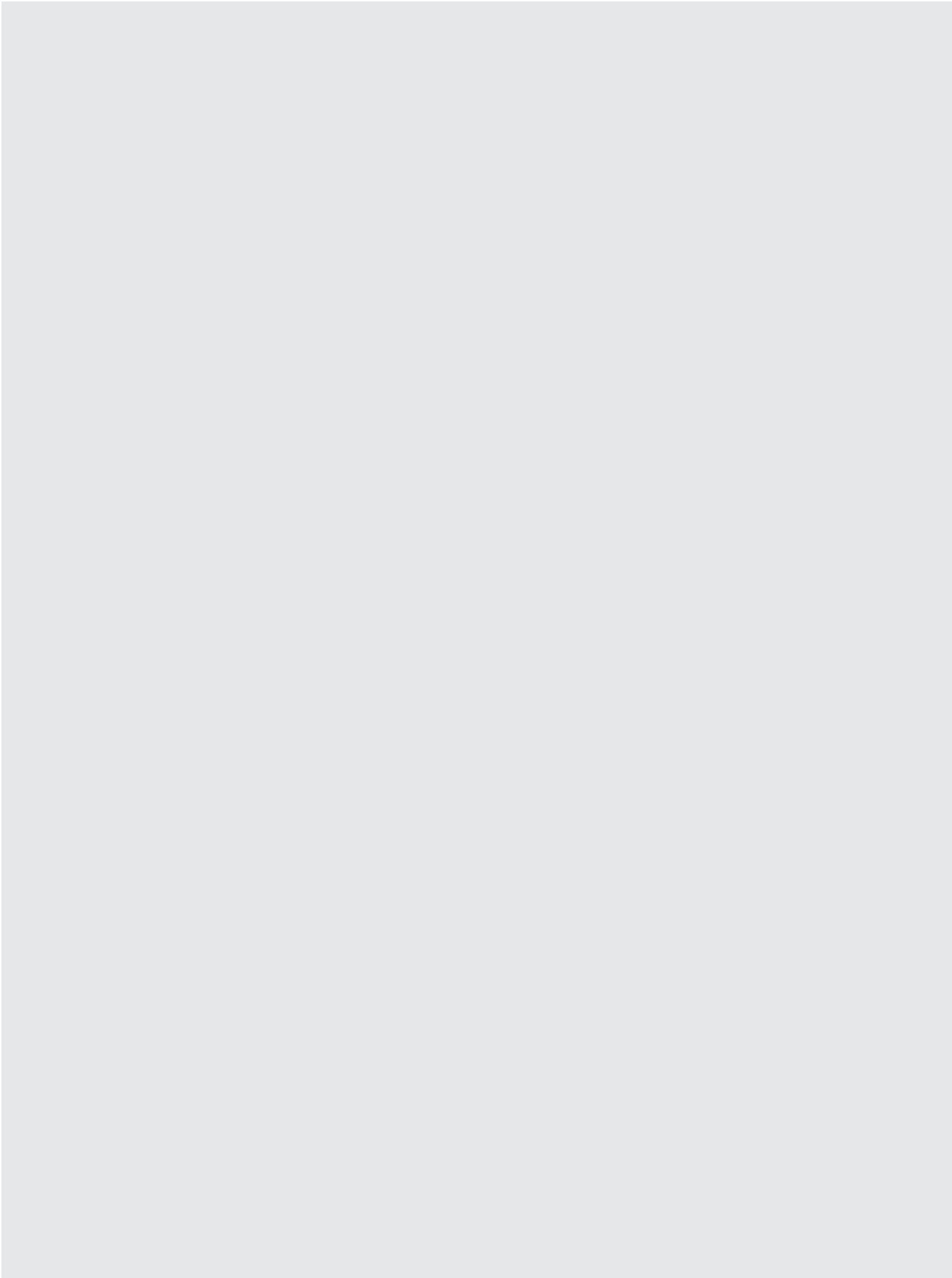
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Introduction to Story Hour



“Let the children come to me. Don’t keep them away.
God’s kingdom belongs to people like them.”

Mark 10:14 (NirV)



WHAT IS STORY HOUR?

Story Hour is an evangelistic program for preschool and kindergarten children four to six years old. Our goal is to make God known simply and clearly, using the stories and teachings of the Bible in a way that children can understand. Our desire is for each child to come to know God, to experience Jesus' love, and to respond to that love as the Holy Spirit works in each heart.

Story Hour (and Little Lambs, a companion program for two- and three-year-olds) was developed to complement Coffee Break, an evangelistic Bible study program for women. However, it can be used as an independent program in a variety of settings.

The Story Hour program materials are divided into six units, intended to span a period of two years as outlined below:

Year One

Unit 1: God's Creation and Care (Old Testament Stories)

Unit 2: Jesus Brings Salvation (New Testament Stories)

Unit 3: Jesus' Love (New Testament Stories)

Year Two

Unit 4: God's Promise (Old Testament Stories)

Unit 5: God's Son (New Testament Stories)

Unit 6: God's Children (New Testament Stories)

Each **unit** is divided into three or four mini-units or **themes** (see table of contents, pp. 5-6). Ideas for using these themes for several sessions are presented on theme pages marked with a band of handprints along the right-hand side of the page. The sample below will help you identify these pages.

Unit 1: God's Creation and Care
Sessions 3, 4, 5

Theme
GOD WANTS US TO OBEY

Bible Words
I will obey your word
Psalm 119:37

Theme Song
"I Can Obey"
God gives us directions to help us each day—
for our protection, so we need to obey.
And we learn, the rules can be good
to help with decisions and do as we should.

Chorus:
So I can obey for God loves me,
So I can obey for God knows me,
So I can obey every day
"Oh Lord, I will obey."

—Worship Resources, © 1998, Big Steps #2 (adapted by Music Services, 2009) Chappman Dr.,
Hayden, TN 37064

Words and music for the theme song are in the Songs section of this program guide and
on the accompanying cassette. Sing-along Creation Songs by Mary Rice Hopkins.
Additional stories will fit with the stories about Noah, Joshua, Elijah, David, and Jonah in
Unit 1 and with the Mother's Day story about Hannah.

Other Suggested Songs
"God Made a Great Big World" Mary Rice Hopkins, Sing-along Creation Songs cassette
"You Thank You, God"

Theme Action Rhyme
"I Belong to God"
You made every part of me, *hands on chest!*
and I belong to you, *point up!*
I'll lift my voice to sing for you, *point to mouth!*
I'll lift my hands to work for you, *hands outstretched!*
use my eyes to see your world, *point to eyes!*
use my ears to hear your word, *point to ears!*
You made every part of me, *hands on chest!*
and I belong to you, *point up!*

—Words: Shere Proter, altered by Helen Kemp. Reprinted from A Child Sings by Helen Kemp, © 1958
Applying Publishing House. Used by permission of Applying Systems. Reprints selected from Songs
for Life, © 1993, CBE Publications.

Unit 1: Theme: God Wants Us to Obey 83

Each year's program guide includes three Getting Acquainted sessions designed to introduce children to Story Hour, to the Bible as God's book, and to prayer. In addition, four sessions each year are planned to help children celebrate selected secular holidays from a Christian perspective.

Session materials for each year are included in a downloadable pdf. Also included (in separate pdfs) are the Leader Resources and Patterns you will need to teach each lesson.

For Story Hour Year 1 we recommend that you also purchase the following companion products and have them available as you lead your preschool children.

Music

Sing With Me Preschool Songs (CD), available from faithaliveresources.org or iTunes

Sing With Me songbook, available from faithaliveresources.org

Sing-along Praise Songs (CD), available from faithaliveresources.org or iTunes

Sing-along Praise Songs songbook, available from faithaliveresources.org

Storybooks

God Loves Me storybooks, available from faithaliveresources.org

Take-home story cards have been developed specifically for each session in Story Hour. These cards present the Bible stories in simple words that preschool and kindergarten children can understand. The front of each card illustrates one scene from the story with beautiful four-color art.

Individual sets for Year One and Year Two can be ordered for each child. These cards are an excellent way to give the children their very own story Bible over a one- or two-year period.





ORGANIZING STORY HOUR

Three aspects of beginning or managing a Story Hour program are particularly important: staff, space, and schedule. We encourage you to enlist the help of small group ministry representatives who can provide additional advice or conduct leadership training workshops. Contact the Coffee Break International office at 1-800-266-2175 or email crhm@crcna.org for additional information.



STAFF FOR STORY HOUR

The Director

Although the director's role calls for leadership and organization skills, the primary requirement is a deep love for children and for those who serve as leaders.

The director is responsible for the total Story Hour program and will

- advertise the program
- recruit and train leaders
- order supplies and materials
- organize the use of space
- schedule the year's program and weekly sessions
- facilitate contacts with families
- connect the program to the church
- develop a cooperative ministry with Coffee Break and Little Lambs
- conduct staff meetings
- model a welcoming love for the children

Smaller programs may not have a Story Hour director at all. In that case, we suggest dividing up the responsibilities among the leaders to help distribute the tasks and to prevent leader burnout.

Leaders

We use the term *leaders* to include both teachers and helpers. The leaders' responsibilities may include

- planning the weekly sessions in cooperation with the director
- preparing materials for the Bible story and learning activities
- telling the Bible story and carrying out the selected activities
- helping discipline the children
- maintaining contacts with families in cooperation with the director
- participating in the weekly staff-support group meetings
- performing specific tasks such as playing the piano or leading group singing

It's ideal to have at least one leader for every five to seven children. In fact, some church education policies require that each group must have two adults present with each small group of children. Leaders should remain with the same group of children throughout the year to provide a safe and predictable environment and to help leaders and children build

relationships. Ideally, you will want to retain the same large group song leader throughout the year too.

SPACE FOR STORY HOUR

Group Needs

Grouping of children is the primary factor in determining space needs. Most likely you will want space for a large group of children for at least part of each session and separate space for smaller groups for the remainder of the time.

Ideally, small groups should be no larger than about ten to fourteen children. You may wish to divide into smaller groups by age. Every week each small group should be made up of the same children. If separate rooms are not available for each small group, make sure some privacy boundaries are defined.

It's especially important to maintain a good ratio of adults to children in order to establish a healthy element of guidance and control. Remember that, for many of these little ones, Story Hour is their first experience in a group situation.

Play Centers

Depending on the amount of space you have available, you can set up play centers in your large group area or in the smaller group areas. When deciding how to organize play centers, consider the number of staff, the amount of supplies needed, and the setup and cleanup time required. If you cannot leave the centers up from week to week, you might consider using a dishpan, clothes basket, or boxes to hold supplies for each center. Here are some ideas for centers and some suggestions for supplies:

- **Art Center**

Throughout the session plans we suggest using an *Art Box* for several learning activities. To make your box, fill a large shoe box or larger plastic or cardboard container with pictures and trims from old greeting cards, stickers, bits of yarn and ribbon, scraps of lace and other fabric or paper trims, pictures from old church school papers, and leftover craft supplies from previous church school or Story Hour sessions. Provide construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, paint, colors, markers, ink or marker stamps, and paint shirts or smocks.

- **Dramatic Play Center**

We've included the *Drama Troupe Suitcase* in the materials list for several activities. In an old suitcase or a large box, collect simple costumes to help children portray Bible characters. Older children's or adults' T-shirts can be belted to look like tunics. Large bath towels can be draped around the children and clipped at the neck with spring-type clothespins to make robes. Add scarves, soft belts or pieces of cotton rope, sandals, and small props appropriate for specific stories. You might want to hang a full-length mirror near this center.

- **Sensory Play Center**

Young children learn through their senses, and they enjoy getting their hands into things: water, sand, rice, Play-Doh—messy, fun-to-feel things. Cover a table with plastic and the floor with plastic or newspaper. Put water in dishpans, and provide corks and small plastic boats, funnels, plastic measuring cups, a colander, and other small containers for pouring and filling. Place textured materials in gallon plastic pails or in muffin tins, and offer spoons or small plastic scoops and other small containers for mixing, pouring, and filling. You may hide in the sand or grains items that relate to an object in the story (keep safety in mind when hiding small objects like coins). Set out Play-Doh, cookie cutters, molds, plastic knives, and rolling pins for another texture experience.

- **Discovery Center**

To encourage children's natural curiosity and to foster appreciation for God's beautiful world, set out various objects from nature such as shells, rocks, leaves, flowers, insects, abandoned bird nests, feathers, and the like. Provide magnifying glasses for a closer look.

- **Book Center**

Gather a basketful of simple, colorful children's books. A rocking chair, pillows, and teddy bears can create a quiet corner for a child who wants a bit of time away from the group. If possible, a leader should be available to read to the children who are interested.

- **Language/Listening Center**

Depending on the resources you have available, provide simple CD players and CDs with children's songs or stories. Or set up a tape recorder for children to record their own stories and messages. If leader supervision is available, you occasionally may want to use a compact disc, a video, or a computer program. Involve the children in these activities so that they aren't just passive viewers or listeners.

These are just a few ideas for centers. Use your imagination to make creative use of your space and to offer the children plenty of opportunity to experiment, to interact with other children, and to respond to the Bible story. Often, you will want to involve the children in one or more center activities as they arrive. At other times, you may want to set up a center for a small group activity or for a specific learning activity later in the session.



THE STORY HOUR SCHEDULE

This Story Hour program guide provides flexible session plans and includes a variety of learning activities. Use the schedule to give children needed structure and familiar repetition and at the same time accommodate the short attention span of young children. Make sure the children are comfortable with any major change in your routine.

We recommend that a session should run approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Here's one way to structure that time:

- Welcome/Play Center Activities (5-10 minutes as children arrive)

- Opening Activities (15-20 minutes)
- Bible Story (15-20 minutes)
- Response Activities (15-20 minutes)
- Snack Time (5-10 minutes)
- Closing Activities (5-10 minutes or until parents arrive)

It's important to delegate tasks within the schedule. You may wish to do some of the planning as a group, using the session plan form we've included in the Leader Resources section in the back of the binder (p. 405).

Perhaps leaders will welcome the children and encourage them to participate in play-center activities. The director might organize the opening activities for the large group. You might use this time to learn the Bible words, sing the theme song, and do the theme action rhyme as presented on the theme pages. Sometimes leaders may wish to use this opening activity time to introduce a craft or other activity to their small group to set the stage for the Bible story.

Generally leaders will tell the Bible story in their small group setting. Consider telling the story to the larger group too, especially when you wish to involve other leaders in pantomime, drama, or reader's theater. The Story Hour puppet introduced in the Welcome to Story Hour session (see p. 33) can add a dialogue dimension to small and large group storytelling.

Use the response time creatively. Session plans provide a variety of activities to encourage you and the children to respond to the Bible truths through song, rhyme, dance, art, and drama. Variety will appeal to various learning styles in your group of children and will satisfy their short attention span.

Snack time is a fun time for children and is a good time to talk together. You will want to keep the advance preparation simple and involve the children when possible. Model thankfulness and mealtime prayer habits by saying simple prayers before eating.

Closing activity time can be used for a specific planned activity or for less structured play in the centers. It's a good time to reassure children of your love and to spend a minute connecting with parents. Make sure you know who is responsible for picking up the child.



LEADING STORY HOUR

In this section, we want to walk you through the theme pages and session plans in this program guide binder and provide some tips to make your task easier. But before we jump right into the role of leading, let's consider what it takes to get off on the right foot.



GETTING STARTED

Maybe you are an experienced leader, eager to tell the story of God's love to one more child. Perhaps you are just beginning this avenue of ministry and feeling inadequate, as Moses did when God called him to lead the people of Israel. Either way, you have the assurance that God says to you, as he did to Moses, "I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Ex. 4:12).

Your sense of God's presence and your love for children will motivate you to make Story Hour a high priority. We'd like you to add three other essentials for your ministry:

- **Prayer**

Spend part of your private prayer time remembering each child's specific needs. Join together for staff prayer before the session begins.

- **Preparation**

Start preparing for each session early. Reflect on the Bible story. Collect needed supplies; recruit others to help prepare visuals and other materials. Take care of all last-minute details before the children arrive.

- **Presence**

If possible, all leaders should be present to greet the children as they arrive with their parents. Smile; speak to each child. Assist with coats and nametags. Help the children find the room for opening activities. Be especially sensitive to the needs of new children and to any parent who may be leaving a child for the first time. Take time to interact with the parents. Modeling God's love to children and parents may be the most important thing you do.

Now join us for a brief overview of the tools we've developed for your ministry for Year One.



STORY HOUR THEMES

Each of the three main units in this program guide binder for Year One is identified by an indexed division page and a contents page that gives a listing of the themes (mini-units) and session titles. You'll notice that each unit is divided into three or four mini-units or themes—a total of ten for Year One. We've developed a theme page to help you highlight these themes during the related sessions. Theme pages can be identified by a strip of handprints along the right-hand side of the page. Each of the ten theme pages includes these features:

Unit 1: God's Creation and Care
Sessions 3, 4, 5

Theme
GOD WANTS US TO OBEY

Bible Words
I will obey your word
Psalm 119:32

Theme Song
"I Can Obey"
God gave us directions to help us each day—
for our protection, so we need to obey.
And I've taken the rules can be helpful
to help with decisions and do as we should.

Chorus:
So I can obey for God loves me,
So I can obey for God knows me,
So I can obey every day,
"Oh Lord, I will obey!"

—Mary Rice Hepkins, © 1988. Rep. Steps 40 Edition, by Music Services, 209 Chapelwood Dr., Franklin, TN 37066.

Words and music for the theme song are in the Songs section of this program guide and on the accompanying cassette. Sing along! Creation Songs by Mary Rice Hepkins. Additional stanzas will fit with the stories about Noah, Joshua, Elijah, David, and Jonah in Unit 1 and with the Matthew Day story about repentance.

Other Suggested Songs
"God Made a Great Big World" (Mary Rice Hepkins, Sing-along Creation Songs cassette)
"We Thank You, God"

Theme Action Rhyme
"I Belong to God"
You made every part of me, (hands on chest)
and I belong to you. (point up)
If I'm my voice to sing for you, (point to mouth)
If my hands to work for you, (hands outstretched)
Use my eyes to see your word, (point to eyes)
Use my ears to hear your word, (point to ears)
You made every part of me, (hands on chest)
and I belong to you. (point up)

—Words: Muse Foster, altered by Helen Kemp. Reprinted from *A Child Sings* by Helen Kemp, © 1956. Augsburg Publishing House, used by permission of Augsburg's former publisher, Concordia Publishing House. © 1995, CRC Publications.

Unit 1, Theme: God Wants Us to Obey 83

This action rhyme helps children praise God with their whole bodies, and it serves as a good connector between the verses and the songs along with singing God's Word.

Key Concepts

- Obey
- Sin
- Forgiveness

God wants us to obey—to do what God tells us to do. We will praise God this concept with doing what their parents, teachers, congregations, and others they love want them to do. Reinforce positive behavior and help children see how they obey God by telling children that when they are kind, share their toys, and **obey**, they are obeying God.

Note to Leaders

- We've suggested using square or rectangular boxes similar in size for telling the story about the tower of Babel in Session 5. You may want to select these boxes, create signs, poster boards, and other items before you members of your staff at the beginning of the year.

Unit 1, Theme: God Wants Us to Obey

- **Bible Words**
- **Theme Song**
- **Theme Action Rhyme**
- **Key Concepts**
- **Notes to Leaders**

• Bible Words

We've selected a Bible verse that will be easy for the children to learn in the two or more weeks you spend on one theme. We have suggested ten theme Bible verses for this year plus six Bible verses to correspond with the getting acquainted and holiday sessions. We have included many of these verses on cards, bookmarks, and other patterns in the Patterns section of this binder. We've also included a set of these verse cards in the Leader Resources section (pp. 423-424) to enable you to make copies. Use every opportunity to reinforce these Bible words throughout the year, but don't worry if every child cannot repeat all the words. Teaching the children to love God's Word is more important.

• Theme Song

Some of the ten theme songs will be old favorites; others are original songs. See page 12 for a list of the musical resources used in this course. We strongly recommend that you have these resources available as you plan your lessons. Young children learn through repetition and will quickly develop favorite songs they'll want to sing over and over. We encourage you to limit the number of new songs you introduce each session so that children can enjoy singing and will carry the words home in their minds and hearts.

• Theme Action Rhyme

We've selected ten rhymes that work well for the two or more sessions you spend on one theme. In some session plans, we have added an action rhyme that is specific to one session. Generally we suggest using a small number of rhymes so that the children can actively respond to the lesson truths without a weekly emphasis on learning new motions and words.

• Key Concepts

Key biblical terms are explained from a child's perspective. We have included these concepts to help you think through how you will talk about these concepts to young children, not as a vocabulary drill for the children. For example, you may choose not to use the term *parable* as you talk with young children, but you will emphasize that Jesus told these stories to help us learn about God's love.

- **Notes to Leaders**

These notes will alert you to a special focus in a particular session, give tips on scheduling special activities, or remind you to collect needed supplies in advance. We've tried to walk in your shoes and anticipate some of the things that take a bit of extra thought and preparation.

SESSION PLANS

Session plans follow a consistent format and include introductory components, the Bible Story section, and the Learning Activities section.

Introductory Components

The introductory portion of the session plan will help you focus your preparation time. It includes these parts:

The screenshot shows a page from a session plan titled "Getting Acquainted". It includes sections for "THEME", "Session 1: Welcome to Story Hour" (with Scripture Matthew 18:5), "Goals for Today", "Personal Meditation", and "BIBLE STORY". Three callout lines with circular ends point from the right side of the page to the "Scripture", "Goals for Today", and "Personal Meditation" sections.

- **Scripture**
- **Goals for Today**
- **Personal Meditation**

- **Scripture**

The Bible passage for each session is identified for you. We encourage you to read the passage and the chapters before and after it so that you are familiar with the context of the story. You might find that using a study Bible or a commentary will help you understand the more difficult passages.

- **Goals for Today**

Goals are written from the child's perspective and will help you plan the session to enable the children to accomplish them. It will be important to remember that young children are just beginning their spiritual journey and will be taking small steps at a time, each at his or her own pace.

- **Personal Meditation**

These brief meditations are meant to focus your thoughts on the scripture for the session and to give you encouragement in your own spiritual walk and ministry to children.

Bible Story

The Bible story narration is written out to help you prepare to tell the story to the children. Become familiar with the story and comfortable with the way you want to tell it—let your own personality come through, and don't hesitate to modify the suggestions for how to tell the story (printed in bold in the story text). To help you prepare and carry out this key part of the Story Hour session, we've included these components:

THEME
Getting Acquainted

Session 1: **Welcome to Story Hour**

Matthew 18:5

Goals for Today

- Children will be given opportunities to
 - get acquainted with Story Hour staff, the routine, and their room.
 - feel loved and welcome.

Personal Meditation

Welcome to Story Hour! Whether this is your first experience in children's ministry or you've sat with a number of years you've been involved, we invite you to embark on an exciting faith adventure.

Jesus welcomed little children with open arms (see Matt. 19:13-15) and emphasized the importance of your ministry with these words: "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me" (Matt. 18:5, NIV). Pray that you will welcome each child with the unconditional love of God, who sees beyond a child's status or appearance or behavior to a precious humble heart.

Through your words and actions, you will plant seeds of learning about God's love in the minds and hearts of young children that can bear fruit for eternity. What an awesome challenge and calling! To lead a little one to Jesus and to trust the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts is a commitment and faith.

Welcome, child of God—another part of your faith journey is about to begin.

BIBLE STORY

Materials for Telling the Story

- 1 "Story Hour" puppet

Preparation

Today's session is designed to introduce the children to Story Hour. This may be a child's first experience in a group setting away from home. Children need to sense your love for them and to learn that Story Hour is a safe place to be. This will take time, but a warm welcome and an explanation of the routine will help each child feel comfortable.

We suggest using a puppet to help you tell the welcome story today and to introduce new songs and Bible verses.

- **Materials for Telling the Story**
- **Preparation**
- **Big Ideas**
- **Telling the Story**
- **Storytelling Option(s)**
- **Follow-up Questions**
- **Prayer Time**

a paper bag, or you can use a stuffed animal. Give the puppet a name, or let the children name their new friend.

Unless you know the children in your group, you will find it helpful to have names for them. You may want to have those names in advance or have children make them up as they come today. You'll find the names as you tell the story.

Big Ideas

- Welcome, boys and girls! It's story time at Story Hour.
- We'll do lots of fun things at Story Hour.
- It's okay to feel scared in a new place.
- We'll try really hard to remember a few people's faces.
- We'll make new friends.

Telling the Story

Be sure to include a dialogue outline for your welcome story. You will want to fill in the details and adapt the story to fit your program. Let your puppet friend make your little ones feel safe for story time. Explain that you will usually tell a Bible story during the time. Today your loving actions will tell the story of God's love for children expressed in Matthew 18:5.

The story follows:

Leader: Welcome, boys and girls! It's story time at Story Hour!

Puppet: Story time! Story Hour! Does that mean we get to listen to stories for a whole hour?

Leader: Well, not exactly. (Puppet's name) We do lots of fun things at Story Hour. We'll sing songs and listen to a story from God's book, the Bible. Sometimes we'll play games together and learn an easy word that rhymes. Sometimes we'll work with glue and scissors and colors and pretty paper. And we'll have a snack too.

Puppet: Songs? And stories? Oh, I can hardly wait.

Leader: That's right. (Puppet's name) We're going to have a wonderful time together. I'm so glad you're here. (Puppet's name)

Puppet: But (puppet's name) I feel a little bit scared. I've never been here before. This room doesn't look like my room at home.

Leader: It's okay to feel scared in a new place. But let's take a look around our room—I think you'd like it! **Take children on a tour of the room, and point out the play centers and other points of interest.**

Puppet: I didn't see a bathroom. That's pretty important for kids like me.

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Storytelling Option

If using puppets is not your style, two leaders can tell the dialogue story. One leader could dress up and play the part of a child (the puppet's part in the dialogue).

Leader: Oh, I'm so glad you reminded me, (puppet's name) We do have a bathroom, and you can use it whenever you need to. **Lead group to bathroom, and explain why/when you want the children to remember about using the bathroom. If the bathroom is away from your regular room, let children know that an adult will always go with them and wait for them.**

Puppet: That sounds good! But what if I need help with glue—you know, all that sticky stuff? and sometimes it's hard to share. Then what?

Leader: You ask our good questions, (puppet's name) We have lots of helpers at Story Hour. I'd like you to meet them right now. **Introduce your helpers to the children. Encourage leaders to get down on the child's level, and let the children know they are caring helpers.**

Puppet: Wow! I think I'm going to like Story Hour!

Leader: Oh, (puppet's name) I know you will. I'm glad you thought about sharing too. We will all try really hard to remember a few simple rules. **State a few simple rules—see p. 22 in the Introduction for guidelines.**

Puppet: I'll try really hard. (puppet's name)

Leader: Follow you will. (puppet's name) And I just know you're going to make lots of new friends too.

Puppet: Are all these kids coming to Story Hour too? I'd like to be their friends?

Leader: Yes! Isn't that wonderful! I want you to listen carefully. I'll say everyone's name so we can get to know each other. **Name each child—you'll probably need names to help you.**

Puppet: Now I know for sure I'm going to like Story Hour! Welcome, everyone!

- Do you think anyone else might feel a little scared, like (puppet's name) did?
- What do you especially like in our room?
- Name each child. I wonder if you know how glad we are that you came today.

Prayer Time

Dear God,
Thank you for Story Hour and for bringing each child here. We want to learn about your love for us. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Choose only as many activities as your time schedule allows.

1. Bible Words, Songs, and Action Rhymes

(Note: We will begin the Bible words in session 2.)

Getting Acquainted, Session 1 25

- **Materials for Telling the Story**
You will want to use this list to assemble materials for the story time.
- **Preparation**
Directions are given for preparing visuals and the setting for telling the story. These will be things you will want to do in advance.



• **Big Ideas**

These brief statements serve as an outline of the Bible story. You may find it helpful to keep them in front of you as you tell the story. We've included a set of these key truths or main ideas in notecard format in the Leader Resources section (pp. 412-421) to make them easy for you to photocopy.

• **Telling the Story**

This section suggests ways to introduce the story as you gather the children around you and set the stage for them. We'd like you to keep your Bible open as you begin to tell the story so that the children know you are telling God's story.



• **Storytelling Option(s)**

Perhaps your schedule or space or your own preference doesn't fit with the primary way we've suggested for telling the story. We've given you at least one other idea in each session for telling the Bible story, and we encourage you to consider some of these alternative ways to make God's Word come alive for your children.

• **Follow-up Questions**

At the end of the story narration, you'll find a list of suggested questions designed to help children review the story and to think about what the story teaches. Be sensitive to your group's unique needs and spiritual development during this time of wondering about God's love.

• **Prayer Time**

We've included a brief prayer for you to say at the conclusion of your story time. Feel free to use your own prayer and to involve the children when you feel they are ready.

Learning Activities

The following activities are designed to introduce each session's Bible truth and to give children a variety of ways to respond to the Bible story:

1. Bible Words, Songs, and Action Rhymes
Philippians 4:6, NLT
Pray about anything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.
Use the verses to guide your prayer modeling throughout today's session. The prayer chain activity on pages 50-51 will help your children learn the words and will give you an opportunity to send the verse home with them.

Session Song
"We Can Pray"
*We can pray when we walk,
 when we kneel, when we play,
 God will listen,
 God will hear us when we pray.*
—Words: Coby Veerstra © 1983, Coby Veerstra van Duynenwilde. Used by permission.
Words and music for this song are in the Songs section of this program guide.

Other Suggested Songs
 "There We Are Together"
 "The Bible" (Story Rice Hopkins, Sing-along Creation Songs cassette)
 "For Health and Strength"

Session Action Rhyme
"Prayer"
*Two little legs jumping all around, (bump up and down and around)
 But when I pray, my legs kneel down, kneel down, stay in this position!
 Ten little fingers wiggle every way, wiggle fingers!
 But I hold my hands this way to pray, hold hands!
 One little mouth to softly say, shape mouth like to say, "Amen"
 "Thank you, God, for making me this way." Bow head in prayer!*
—Adapted from 100 Action Songs for Preschoolers © 1975, David C. Cook Publishing Co. Reprinted with permission. May not be further reproduced.

2. Prayer Modeling
Materials:
 • Story hour puppet

Directions:
 Invite your Story Hour puppet to help you model prayer patterns with your group of children. Children will relate to the puppet's questions about prayer and will catch the puppet's eagerness to learn how to pray. We've included a suggested dialogue.

Puppet: So that's what prayer means—talking to God? That's it?
Leader: Yes, talking to God. Prayer is talking to God. We can talk to God anytime about anything—just like we're talking now.

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7. Snack Time
Materials:
 • Pretzels
 • Juice
 • Small cups

Directions:
 Serve pretzels and juice for your snack, and sing "For Health and Strength" as you pray.

Remember to send a Bible story card home!
 Getting Acquainted
 Getting Acquainted with each child

51 Getting Acquainted, Session 3

• **Bible Words, Songs, and Action Rhymes**

• **Art, Drama, and Other Activities**

• **Snack Time**

- ***Bible Words, Songs, and Action Rhymes***

Simple activities to help little ones learn the Bible words, a reminder to use the theme song and theme action rhyme, and other song suggestions are presented first in the learning activities in every session plan.

- ***Art, Drama, and Other Activities***

Every session plan describes a number of activities that will appeal to various learning styles and will accommodate the short attention span of young children. A list of special materials needed for each activity is included. We have assumed that you will have a supply of construction paper, glue, scissors and other basic materials on hand (see Suggested Supplies in the Leader Resources section, p. 406).

We encourage you to try a wide variety of activities and to be especially intent on involving the child. We recommend that you carefully choose only as many activities as your time schedule allows and that you feel free to vary the order of activities. Perhaps on occasion you will want to use an art activity to introduce the story rather than to respond to it. Sometimes you may choose not to do an individual art response at all but to have children respond to the story by making a group mural or through song, dance, or drama. You need not worry about having something to send home every week—the opportunity you’ve given the children to learn about God and to express the meaning of God’s story matters most.

- ***Snack Time***

We’ve suggested simple snacks, sometimes using a symbol or idea from the story if appropriate. We’ve also included ideas for prayer and conversation with the children.

Every session plan concludes with this reminder:



We encourage you to purchase one set of story cards each year for every child in Story Hour. (Cards are available from Faith Alive Christian Resources.) We suggest that you purchase a 6" x 9" (15 cm x 23 cm) three-ring binder for each child so that children can collect the story cards and make their own story Bible. (You can find this size binder at most office supply stores.) If the cost is prohibitive, perhaps another organization in your church would pay for the binders (and cards too) as a service project, or you might encourage parents to purchase the binders. Or you could purchase inexpensive loose-leaf rings and give one to each child. This may be the only story Bible your child’s family has, or it may be the child’s first very own Bible storybook.



TIPS TO MAKE LEADING EASIER

Experience is often the best teacher in helping to determine what works best for you, but we want to offer a few ideas to save you time and energy.

- Use Velcro strips on carpeted floors to mark off activity areas. When not in use, the strips can be rolled up and stored easily.
- Use clear contact paper to attach pairs of footprints to the floor in the area where you want the children to stand in line. Lining up is a new concept for some, and the footprints will help the children find a place to stand.
- Copy patterns onto cardstock rather than construction paper. Cardstock is more durable and much less damaging to copy machines; it's available at most office supply stores. Generally, we have suggested cardstock rather than construction paper in the materials lists.
- Use bright-colored markers or highlighters to color patterns, and laminate the patterns to make them more durable.
- Recruit seniors or teenagers in your church to help with cutting and other preparation of session materials. Schedule a time to do this prior to the beginning of the season, and store patterns in labeled shoe boxes or similar containers.
- Cover tables for messy projects with plastic shower curtain liners. The liners are durable and large enough to cover standard-sized tables and are easy to wipe off.
- To make sponge painting less messy for children, insert a large safety pin into a damp sponge. Attach a spring-type clothespin to the safety pin to make a handle. (See illustration with Suggested Supplies, p. 406 in the back of this program guide.)
- Provide glue sticks or pour glue into small shallow containers, and let the children use cotton swabs to paint the glue where needed.
- Use a blow dryer to dry art projects quickly.
- Use a squirt bottle of glass cleaner to clean tables, and fill one with soapy water to quickly clean messy hands.
- Take photos of each child early in the season, and make photocopies to use for art activities throughout the year. You also may want to take some group pictures for bulletin boards.
- Use colored nametags to divide your larger group into smaller groups. Add a colored sticker to each child's nametag to match a sticker at the child's place in the circle or on the child's locker or coat hook.
- Develop a system for storing story visuals and other materials you want to use another time. Inexpensive cardboard file boxes are available at most office supply stores. You may want to cut large visuals into sections so that they can be stored in file folders. It might be easiest to organize your file by session titles with one or more folders for each session.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS with STORY HOUR CHILDREN

Although the Story Hour program is centered on the Bible story and related learning activities, much of what the children will learn about God’s love will come through their relationship with you. You can build that relationship through understanding, love, and discipline.



UNDERSTANDING the PRESCHOOL or KINDERGARTEN CHILD

Although the children in your Story Hour program may vary in age by as much as three years, and although each will develop individually, preschool and kindergarten children do share similar characteristics. Understanding typical patterns of physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual development will make your task easier. We encourage you to be especially sensitive to the child who may be developmentally delayed in one or more of these areas and to offer extra support and encouragement to both child and parent. Because early detection of delays and intervention is so important for the child’s later development, you may want to help parents network with the school system and other support agencies in your community.

Physical Development

The preschooler’s and kindergartner’s large muscles are well developed, but their small muscles are not as coordinated. Most of your children will run, jump, wave their arms, and clap their hands with ease. Younger ones will find it difficult to use scissors. Still they delight in creating things—gluing, coloring, cutting, and putting things together. They also prefer to move rather than sit quietly. Marching, doing action rhymes and motions to music, and acting out stories are good ways to channel their enthusiasm. Some may have trouble focusing their eyes on small objects for long periods, but they love large, colorful visuals.

Intellectual Development

Preschool and kindergarten children are curious and eager to learn. The questions they ask are important—they’re usually satisfied with simple answers and often like to answer their own questions. Much of their learning comes through their five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Your children will enjoy hands-on learning experiences; these are sometimes messy and a bit hectic, but they’re also vital to the children’s experience.

Much has been written about the different ways that children and adults learn. By selecting a wide variety of activities, you will appeal to these three main learning styles or preferences:

- **Auditory**

Some children learn best while hearing a message; they are naturally good listeners. These children are talkative, can repeat stories, and enjoy group play. They usually like music and can remember lyrics well. They may enjoy using a tape recorder to retell the story.

- **Visual**

Some children learn best from visual stimulation and benefit from visual aids such as photographs, drawings, and videos. Often these children are quiet and prefer to play alone. They will benefit from watching the leader demonstrate the learning activities and model appropriate behavior.

- **Kinesthetic**

Some children learn best while doing and when they can touch things they are learning about. They enjoy large-motor activities. They are usually very people-oriented and need to be active while learning. They like to talk and move their hands and legs during the learning process; sitting still while listening to a story is very difficult for them. It's especially important for you to link the story to the response activity for these children.

Preschool and kindergarten children also think very concretely. Abstract ideas—love, justice, peace, and so on—and concepts such as salvation and sin are difficult for them to understand. You'll note that we've introduced only a handful of key concepts throughout Year One and that we repeat them often on the theme pages.

Social Development

Preschool and kindergarten children are a delight. They express their feelings directly, spontaneously, and freely. They are anxious to please you, and younger children may be jealous of your attention. Because they are the center of their own world, your children still have much to learn about taking turns and sharing. While making allowances for these normal stages of development, you will need to gently and carefully guide their behavior, all the time leading them to see Jesus' love for them and others.

Spiritual Development

James Fowler in his book *Stages of Faith* (Harper/Collins—see Other Suggested Resources, p. 425) describes how a child's faith develops as a child matures and becomes more independent. In *So You've Been Asked to Give the Children's Message* (Faith Alive), Jessie Schut summarized Fowler's three stages of faith development of children in these words:

- **Stage One**

Between ages one and three, children learn to trust, to feel secure, as they experience love and hope.

- **Stage Two**

Between ages three and six, children blend fact and fantasy, combining images of remembered stories with bits of experienced faith traditions. During this age span, children begin to form certain important faith concepts, such as the greatness of God and the love of Jesus. At this age, children still are not able to understand the abstract concepts so typical of much Christian doctrine and belief (such as the Trinity or original sin). Neither can they grasp the metaphors we use to explain the Christian life ("Jesus is the Lamb of God").

- **Stage Three**

Between the ages of six to twelve, children develop an appreciation for narrative and will grow in understanding the great story of salvation. Trying to make sense of the world, children will also want to figure out their own relationship to salvation and where they fit into the story. Abstractions still do not mean much to children of these ages.

For the most part, your Story Hour children will be in the second stage of their spiritual development. It's possible that some of your children may be struggling to develop a sense of trust—these children especially need to experience God's love through you.

As you lead Year One of Story Hour, you will gradually unfold the plan of salvation. Your goal is to help the children understand that the gift of salvation is for them too. Preschool and kindergarten children are not excluded from God's family because of age.

But we must also remember that young children want to please. They are imitators, quick to pick up what you might want them to do or say. Be careful not to build a false sense of security in a child—or in yourself—because a little one has repeated the "right" words. At the same time, do not underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit. It's important that you carefully and simply explain what it means to be a child of God; then trust the Spirit to transfer that head knowledge into a knowledge of the heart. God alone can determine whether the commitment is genuine.

Sometimes a child may ask questions about God's work in our hearts, and you may feel the Spirit's prompting to talk with that child about receiving Jesus into his or her heart. When you sense that a child is ready to make this commitment, we recommend that you set aside a time to meet with the child and the parent. If the parent is unable to come in person, a phone call or letter seeking approval to meet with the child will show that you respect the parent/child relationship and that your intention is to encourage the child's spiritual development, rather than to force a commitment. (We recommend that if you meet one-on-one with a child that you do so in a quiet corner of the room where other children and leaders are working.)

There are many ways to lead a child to Christ. "Whenever possible, use visuals . . . and clear statements such as:

round circle world—"God made the world and the first two people, Adam and Eve."

sad face—"On the saddest day Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Now everyone disobeys God. God calls that sin."

heart—"But God still loves us. He made a way to forgive our sins."

manger—"He sent his son, Jesus, as a baby. We remember this at Christmas."

cross and empty tomb—"When Jesus grew up to be a man, he died on the cross to forgive our sins. On Easter, he came back to life."

happy face—"If we believe Jesus did all this for us, God will forgive us for the wrong things we do. God will send the Spirit (the Friend whom Jesus promised) to help us love and serve God. Someday, we can live in heaven with Jesus."

—Adapted from Jacque Bolt and Diane Dykgraaf, *Little Ones Need Jesus*, © 1996, Faith Alive Christian Resources).

If you sense that the child is ready to make a commitment, offer to help them pray a prayer something like this:

Dear Jesus, I know that I disobey you and do wrong things.
I am sorry for my sins.
I know that you love me and that you died on the cross for me.
I know God loves me and forgives my sins.
I want to love you more.
Thank you for loving me. Amen.

If a little one does make a commitment, continue to encourage that fledgling faith in the normal context of the Story Hour setting. And whether or not the children do respond in this way to the good news about Jesus, continue to scatter seeds, praying faithfully for each child by name that the Holy Spirit will cause these seeds to take root and grow. Modeling your faith in Jesus will be a powerful witness to these little ones in your care.

LOVING THE STORY HOUR CHILD

The most basic foundation for building a relationship with your Story Hour children is your love for each one as a special child of God. Your own personality and experience with children will shine through, but we want to suggest a few simple ways to communicate your love.

- Address each child by name. This says, “You are important to me. I know who you are.”
- When children are absent, let them know they are missed. Send a postcard to let them know they have a special place in your Story Hour group.
- Show affection with appropriate touch and hugs. Let each child set the pace. Those who need loving affection most may not know how to accept it comfortably.
- Praise each child generously. Look for opportunities to compliment, thank, and encourage each child. Make sure your praise is genuine and not simply an attempt to make them feel good.
- Communicate at their eye level. Make every effort to get down to the child’s level by sitting or kneeling. In conversation, be careful to respect their thoughts and feelings.
- Celebrate birthdays. Plan a special day for each child or a monthly celebration and a time to celebrate summer birthdays, or send a birthday card to each child’s home.

DISCIPLINING THE STORY HOUR CHILD

Discipline is positive, not negative. Children will feel secure when they know your expectations—when they are simple, reasonable, and clearly stated—and when they know you will be consistent. Start with a few simple rules like these:

- When one person (leader or child) is speaking, we will be good listeners.
- We will walk (in the room, the hall, the church) except during running games.
- We will be kind and polite to each other.

State your simple rules often, and expect the same behavior from each child. Notice and praise good behavior. Be careful to distinguish between a child’s willful disobedience and

childish behavior (spilled milk or paint is bound to happen). The best way to deal with a defiant child is to state again what positive behavior is expected and then to either isolate that child from the group or keep the child from participating in an activity. After you've disciplined a child, reassure the child of your love. Hug the child warmly; let the disobedient child know the joy of forgiveness.

Leading little ones to Jesus is a privilege and an awesome responsibility. Jacque Bolt and Diane Dykgraaf, seasoned Little Lambs and Story Hour leaders, compare the task to gardening: "A seed, a flower; a story, a child. The seed can become a flowering plant only if someone plants it. The Bible story will never change the life of a child unless someone tells it" (*Little Ones Need Jesus*, Faith Alive Christian Resources). Never doubt the importance of your ministry to these precious children. May you experience much joy and blessing!



“ . . . whoever welcomes a little child like this
in my name welcomes me.”

Matthew 18:5

Theme

GOD MAKES HIS WONDERFUL WORLD

Bible Words

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1

Theme Song

That's Good

Refrain:

God said, That's good! That's good! Yes, it's very, very, very, very good!
That's good! That's good! Yes it's very, very, very, very, good.
It all came about in seven simple days when God created the world.

Day one brought the day and night.
Day two brought the sky in sight.
Day three brought the earth, the flowers, and the trees
and also the rolling seas.

Refrain

Day four brought the sun, stars, and moon.
Day five brought the fish and birds that croon.
Day six –animals, and man he liked the best.
Day seven, God took a rest, and said

Refrain

Words and Music: Jacquelyn and Jon Negus; © 1993, 1999, Momcat Productions, Inc. Used by permission.
This song is available on the *Sing With Me Preschool Songs* CD, iTunes, and the *Sing With Me* songbook.

Other Suggested Songs

"Little Miracle" (Mary Rice Hopkins, www.maryricehopkins.com)
"Hip Hip Hooray (Hippopotamus)" (Mary Rice Hopkins, www.maryricehopkins.com)
"Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes", (*Sing With Me Preschool Songs* CD)



Theme Action Rhyme

In the Beginning God Created

Say together:

In the beginning God created—the heavens and the earth (softly)

In the beginning God created—the heavens and the earth (a little louder)

In the beginning God created—the heavens and the earth (full voice)

Leader: God made the light. **All:** It is good!

Leader: God made the dark. **All:** It is good!

Leader: God made the sky. **All:** It is good!

Leader: God made the sea. **All:** It is good!

Leader: God made the land. God made the plants,
flowers, and trees.

All: It is good!

Say together:

In the beginning God create —the heavens and the earth (softly)

In the beginning God created—the heavens and the earth (a little louder)

In the beginning God create —the heavens and the earth (full voice)

Leader: God made the sun, **All:** It is good!

Leader: the moon and the stars. **All:** It is good!

Leader: God made the fish, **All:** It is good!

Leader: the birds and the bees, **All:** It is good!

Leader: hippos and fleas, Adam and Eve.

Then he made me!

All:It is good!

All:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (softly)

In the beginning God created—the heavens and the earth (a little louder)

In the beginning God created—the heavens and the earth (full voice)

—Diane Dykgraaf, © 2015 Faith Alive Christian Resources.

Key Concept

- Created

God created the whole world. God made night and day; the land and sea; the sun, moon, and stars; and plants and creatures from nothing. God said so and they came to be. Then God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed life into him. “God created human beings . . . in the likeness of God” (Gen. 1:27, NIV). Help your little ones appreciate the greatness of our God who made a world so beautiful and who made each one of us a unique part of creation.

Notes to Leaders

- If you plan to have a “Morning of Wonder” during the first session in Unit 1 (see learning activity #2, p. 69), you will need to send a note home the week before. Invite the children to bring a small creature in a cage or a closed container. Remind children and parents that the creature must be small and gentle—a turtle, a chameleon, a frog, or a bird, for example—and it must go back home. Or your children might like to bring a caterpillar, butterfly, ladybug, cricket, or other insect in a small jar with a lid. Pretty stones, leaves, thistles, and flowers will also add to your wonder of God’s creation. Be sure parents understand that bringing something is optional, and give them a number to call if they have questions.
- If you want to use the “YOU Are a Miracle” video as described in session 2 (learning activity #3, p. 78), you may find it helpful to make the video the week before you plan to use it.





THEME

God Makes His Wonderful World

Session 1: **The Really Big Beginning**

Genesis 1:1-25

Goals for Today

Children will be given opportunities to

- learn that God created the world.
- delight in the wonder of God's beautiful creation.

Personal Meditation

"In the beginning God . . ." (Gen. 1:1). It's almost too hard to imagine a God who goes beyond time and space as we know it, to realize that this earth had a beginning, but that God did not—and to think that this world and everything in it was an idea in the mind of God before it came to be. Let yourself be amazed as you ponder again the vast creative power of God. Marvel at the color, the beauty, and the variety of all things created. Know without a doubt that it didn't just happen by chance.

Focus your wondering about God's creation on the children God has given you this season in Story Hour. Already you may have recognized each child's unique personality. Perhaps you're already concerned about the equally unique needs each child brings and the challenge that presents to you. Offer your prayers of thanks and praise to the Master Designer for each child and ask that you will see the beauty in each one. Know without a doubt that it is not by chance that God is using you.



BIBLE STORY

Materials for Telling the Story

- Bible
- Story visuals (patterns 1-1A through 1-1J)
- White cardstock
- Markers
- Laminate or clear contact paper (optional)
- Poster putty
- 24" (61 cm) posterboard circle or pizza cardboard
- Black construction paper (optional)
- Black, yellow, blue, brown, and green crayons, highlighters, or sidewalk chalk
- Easel (optional)

Preparation

On white cardstock, make one copy of the following patterns: 1-1A (moon), 1-1B (stars), 1-1C (sun), 1-1D (monkey), 1-1E (small fish), 1-1F (large fish), 1-1G (elephant), 1-1H (bird), 1-1I (peacock), 1-1J (tree). Cut out and color the patterns with markers; laminate them or cover them with clear contact paper if desired. Put a small amount of poster putty on the back side of each visual. (You will want to save the visuals for the next session.)

If you prefer to use sidewalk chalk, use black posterboard or cover the pizza cardboard with black construction paper. You can smudge the chalk with an old sock to soften or blend colors. Practice telling the story and drawing with your crayons, highlighters, or chalk a few times on a separate piece of paper or posterboard.



Big Ideas

- In the beginning, there was nothing—no earth, no people.
- But God was there. And God had a wonderful plan to make a big, beautiful world.
- The first day God said, “Let there be light.” There was light and dark.
- The second day God said, “Let there be sky in my world.”
- The third day God said, “Let there be land and water and grass and trees.”
- The fourth day God said, “Let there be a big, warm sun and a beautiful moon and lots of stars.”
- The fifth day God said, “Let there be fish to live in the water and birds to live in the sky.
- The sixth day God said, “Let there be all kinds of animals to live on the land.”

Telling the Story

Place your circle on an easel or lay it on the floor. Keep your crayons, chalk, or highlighters and story visuals near you. Gather the children around you. Open your Bible to Genesis 1, and show the children that you will tell them the very first story in the Bible. Remind the children that all of the stories in the Bible are true. Introduce the Bible words: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Ask the children to say them with you as you repeat them several more times, possibly snapping your fingers and saying them in rhythm. Tell the children that today’s story is going to tell them what these words mean.

The story follows:

“In the beginning . . .” That was a long, long time ago—before there was an earth, or people, or anything! **(Ask the children to close their eyes and tell you what they see.)** Nothing! That’s what it was like in the beginning. But God was there. And God decided to make a big, beautiful world.



Storytelling Option

You may wish to use two beautifully illustrated books from the *God Loves Me* series of Bible storybooks written for young children (Patricia L. Nederveld, *God Loves Me* series, Faith Alive Christian Resources—see Other Suggested Resources, p. 425). *Blue and Green and Purple Too! The Story of God’s Colorful World* and *It’s a Noisy Place! The Story of the First Creatures* capture the story of the first six days. Gather your group of children close around you and hold the books like an easel so that the children can see the story come alive as you tell it.

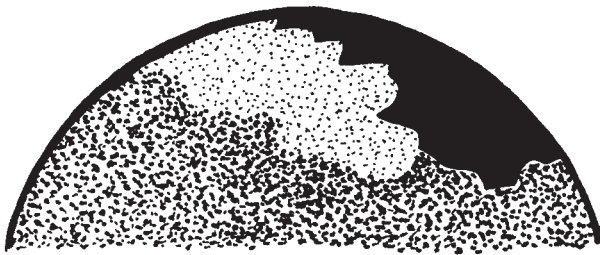
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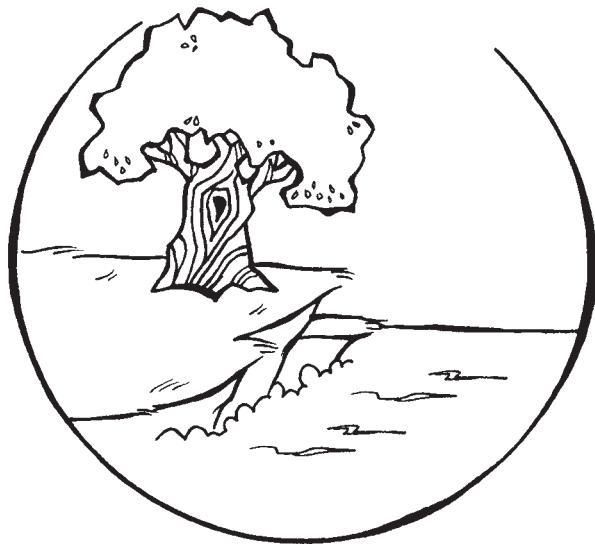


One day God looked at the empty world **(begin shading black near the top of the circle)** and said, "Let there be light." And there was light, just like that! **(Shade yellow next to the black.)** Now there was light and there was dark.

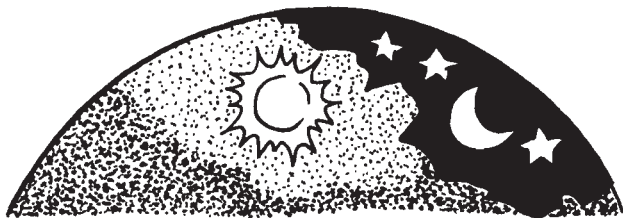
blue



The next day God looked at the world again. "Let there be sky in my world," God said. **(Shade in blue sky.)** And there it was—a beautiful blue sky. The sky was very good!



On the third day God spoke again. "Let there be land and water and grass and trees," God said. **(Begin shading and drawing with brown, blue, and green as you continue talking. Add tree.)** And there it was—land, water, growing things everywhere. Can you imagine how pleased God was? God could hardly wait for the next day!



On the fourth day God said, "Let there be a warm sun and a beautiful moon and lots of stars in my world." **(Add sun, moon, and stars as you talk.)** And just like that—out came the sun to light up the day and the moon and the stars to light up the night. What a place this world was! A very good place.



Then God looked at the world again. On the fifth day God said, "Let there be fish to live in the water, and birds to live in the sky." **(Add fish and birds.)** And there were fish swimming and birds flying! God's world was becoming better and better!

On the sixth day God filled the world full of animals, every kind of animal you've ever seen. **(Add elephant and monkey.)** God must have smiled when he made the elephant's trunk. And the monkey's tail. God looked at the world and every creature in it. It was very, very good!



Look around you. Isn't God's world beautiful? And just think—God didn't use glue or paint or crayons or brushes or anything else. God spoke and everything came to be. God made the world from nothing at all. Only our great God can make something from nothing.

- Who can make something from nothing?
- What part of God's creation do you like best?

Prayer Time

Dear God,
Thank you for making this beautiful world. Thank you for the fish and the birds and the animals, and for all the beautiful trees and flowers. You are a great God! Amen.



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Choose only as many activities as your time schedule allows. Use some activities to introduce today's Bible truth and others to give the children a variety of ways to respond to the Bible story.

1. Bible Words, Songs, and Action Rhymes

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Introduce the Bible words as you gather the children for story time. While the children are working today, prompt them with the phrase "In the beginning . . ." and pause for them to add the ending. Ask them what else God created. The Bible words collage (learning activity #4, p. 70) provides another way to help children learn this verse.

Theme Song

"That's Good." (Jacquelyn and Jon Negus, *Sing With Me Preschool Songs* CD)

Other Suggested Songs

"Hip Hip Hooray (Hippopotamus)" (Mary Rice Hopkins, www.maryricehopkins.com)

"He's Got the Whole World" (*Sing With Me Preschool Songs* CD, or *Sing With Me* Songbook)

"My God Is So Great" (with motions) (*Sing With Me Preschool Songs* CD, or *Sing With Me* Songbook)

"Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes," (*Sing With Me Preschool Songs* CD)

Theme Action Rhyme

"It Is Good!"

2. Morning of Wonder

Materials

- Bag of leaves, acorns, and other items from nature
- Small creatures and nature items children bring from home
- Magnifying glass (optional)

Directions:

One week ahead of time, send a note home to the child's family explaining what children can bring for this activity—see Notes to Leaders on page 63. Collect a few extra things yourself, such as leaves, acorns, an old bird nest, seashells, and so forth, and place them in a brown bag.

Welcome each child's "show and tell" with enthusiasm. Be ready to include children who did not bring anything—let them help you arrange the display and add leaves and other items you have in a bag. Spend time enjoying the display of animals and bugs and other things from God's world. Let the children take a close-up look at the nature displays with a magnifying glass if you have one available. Talk about how God has created each one to be very unique and special. Emphasize the importance of caring for God's beautiful world.

3. Nature Walk

Materials

- Paper lunch bags (one per child)
- Stickers illustrating things God created
- Crayons and markers
- Egg cartons (one per child—optional)
- Clear contact paper (optional)
- Construction paper (one sheet per child—optional)
- Plastic grocery bags (one per child—optional)

Directions:

Provide stickers, crayons, and markers. Invite the children to decorate their bags as they desire. Write THINGS GOD MADE on each bag. If you prefer or are short of time, you can use empty egg cartons instead of bags for collecting things on your nature walk. Or you can make a bracelet for each child from clear contact paper (sticky side out), and let the children attach items they collect to the paper.

Take your group outside for a nature walk. (You may need an extra helper for this activity.) Talk about the things God made, and encourage the children to collect pieces of nature in their bags or egg cartons. Be sure to talk with the children about what they can collect (small stones, sticks, leaves, feathers) and about what they can't collect (planted flowers, large rocks, bugs). Send the collections home in the bags or egg cartons. Or if you have time, let the children make a collage of their nature items by gluing or taping them onto a sheet of construction paper. Write THINGS GOD MADE on each paper. Send the collages home in a plastic grocery bag.

4. Bible Words Collage

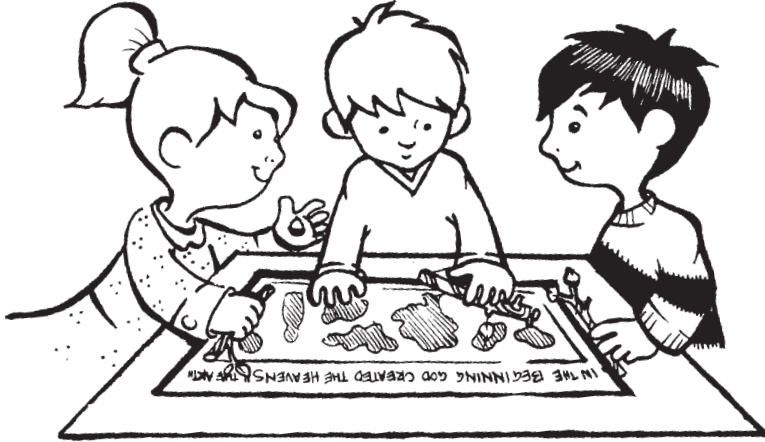
Materials

- Pictures of things God made (except people)
- Large sheet of posterboard
- Marker
- Yardstick
- Twigs, seashells, and other items from nature (optional)
- Construction paper (one sheet per child—optional)
- Bible words cards (one per child from pattern 1-1K—optional)

Directions:

Ahead of time, cut pictures of things God made from magazines, newspapers, old greeting cards, seed catalogs, and the like. (You may want to add people in the next session but don't include people pictures this time.) Make sure you have several pictures for each child in your group. Draw a line with a marker approximately 2" (5 cm) from the edge of the posterboard to form a border. In the border surrounding the paper, write the Bible words: IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. Place the posterboard and other materials in the center of a low table so that the children can walk around the table to make a group collage.

Have the children select pictures of things God created and glue them onto the posterboard. Help them take turns, and show them how to overlap the pictures to make a collage. For a three-dimensional look, add small twigs, seashells, acorns, and other items. Hang the collage in your room to use for review in the next session.

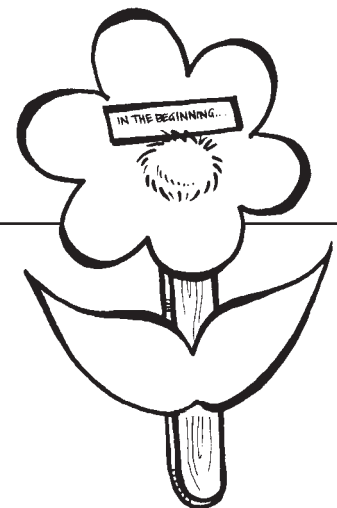


If you prefer, children can make individual collages. Provide pictures, construction paper, and Bible words cards (pattern 1-1K). Have them make the picture collage and add the card last.

5. Fun Foam Flower

Materials

- Bible words cards (one per child from pattern 1-1K)
- Patterns 1-1L (leaf) and 1-1M (flower)
- Green and other bright-colored foam sheets
- Tongue depressors (one per child)
- Ladybug stickers (one or two per child)
- Brown pom-poms (one per child)
- 3" (8 cm) lengths of magnetic strip (one per child)
- Tacky glue



Directions:

Ahead of time, copy and cut out the Bible words cards (pattern 1-1K). Copy and cut out the leaf and flower patterns (1-1L and 1-1M), and use the patterns to cut leaves from the green foam and flowers from the bright-colored foam. Make one set for each child. (Foam sheets are available from craft and school supply stores.) Glue the magnetic strip to the tongue depressor. Make a sample flower to show the children.

Show the children how to glue the leaves and flowers onto the tongue depressor. Glue the pom-pom onto the middle of the flower, and add one or two ladybug stickers to the stem. Glue or staple the Bible words card to the flower.

6. Sand Paintings

Materials

- Bible words cards (one per child from pattern 1-1K)
- Sand
- Tub or dishpan
- White or light blue construction paper (one sheet per child)
- Blue markers, sidewalk chalk, or colored pencils
- Glue sticks or bottles of glue with tips
- Fish stickers (several per child)
- Seashells, tiny pebbles (optional)
- Plastic grocery bags (one per child)

Directions:

Ahead of time, copy and cut out the Bible words cards (pattern 1-1K), and place sand in a shallow tub or dishpan. Give each child a sheet of construction paper, and encourage them to create their own seascape by coloring water and waves on the paper with markers, sidewalk chalk, or colored pencils. Show the children how to draw lines of glue on part of their paper. Have them hold their papers above the tub or dishpan and dump handfuls of sand on the glue, letting excess sand fall into the tub or dishpan. Glue seashells and tiny pebbles in the sand and stick fish stickers in the water. Glue the Bible words card in one corner. Send the seascapes home in plastic grocery bags.

7. Game: “Where Do I Live?”

Materials

- Pictures of creatures God made
- Clear contact paper (optional)
- Three 24" (61 cm) circles of white posterboard
- Sidewalk chalk, markers, and highlighters

Directions:

Ahead of time collect pictures of creatures from magazines (National Geographic and wildlife magazines), calendars, postcards, and so forth. Laminate the pictures or cover them with clear contact paper if desired.

Divide your group into three teams. If possible, assign one leader to each team. Give each team one of the posterboard circles and a supply of chalk, markers, and highlighters. Have one group make the sky (blue background, clouds, sun, moon, stars). Have another group make the earth (green grass, trees, and plants; brown dirt and rocks, and so forth). Ask the third group to make the sea (blue water, green waves, white foam, pink sand and seashells, and so forth). Tell the children to make just the backgrounds—no creatures! (If you feel your little ones aren't ready for this group activity, make the backgrounds ahead of time, or ask an artistic teenager in your church to design them for you.)

Hang the scenes in three different locations in your room. Have all the children stand with you in the center of the room. Show them a picture of one of God's creatures from the collection you've made or from the book. Explain that they need to decide where that