

Living the Word: Teaching Youth God's Story

Narrative Lectionary, Year 4

SAMPLE

God's Good Creation

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Lesson #4-1

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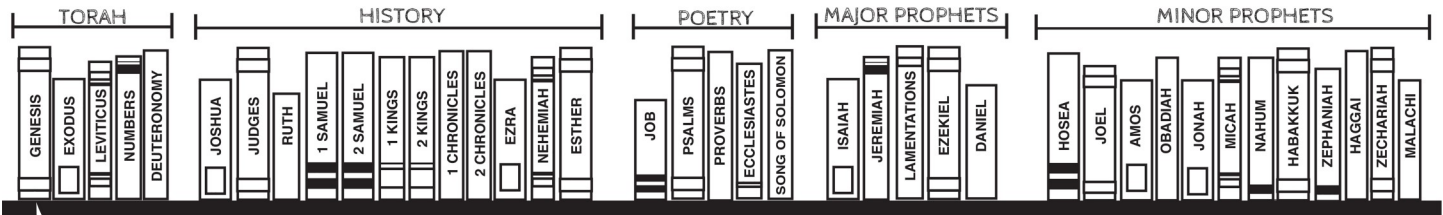
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OLD TESTAMENT



GENESIS

God's Good Creation

Genesis 1:1-2a

Today we explore the blessing of new beginnings: the beginning of a season, a narrative lectionary, the Bible, and the created world.

Making Connections

According to the Genesis account of the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and filled them with all that is good. Other biblical accounts also celebrate the blessing of creation. The Psalmist is in awe of God's handiwork (Psalm 8:4). The disciples are awestruck as they witness creation—wind and sea—obeying Jesus (Mark 4:41). Creation was just the beginning of the blessings that continue to flow toward us.

Lesson @ A Glance

#4-1: God's Good Creation
Genesis 1:1-2:4a



The Point: God declares that creation is good.

Making Connections: God Provides Blessings

Spiritual Practice Emphasis: Worship

Bible Nuts & Bolts: A Brief History of the Bible, Part 1: Old Testament

Story Summary

God's Good Creation

In the beginning, God made order out of chaos. God began with nothing and created the world and all that is in it through a step by step process. That ordered process demonstrated care for the big picture and care for the details. As God paused to view the progress after each step (or each day), God was pleased that it was good. God was uniquely involved in preparing good things in creation to be a blessing to humanity. We

are a part of God's creation, created in God's image, and as God continues to bless us, we can be a blessing to others as well.

The Point

God declares that creation is good. That detail and order means a beautiful place for us to live, but it also helps us know that God is interested in bringing together the details of our lives.

God saw everything that
[God] had made, and
indeed, it was very good.
Genesis 1:31

Bible Nuts & Bolts: A Brief History of the Bible. Part 1: Old Testament

The Old Testament contains the first 39 books in the Protestant Bible. It is a collection of ancient texts that were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek and later translated to other languages, including English. The writing of the Old Testament spanned 500 years. The Christian Old Testament is divided into categories: the Law, the History, Poetry, and the Prophets (major and minor). Although the individual books in the Old Testament are separate writings, collectively they tell a story of a loving God

who wants a relationship with humanity.

For Your Reflection:

Where has God's creative power resonated with your current life experience?

When is the last time you praised God for your favorite part of creation?

How will you address the youth's opposing ideas or questions about creation?

Spiritual Practice: Worship

Worship is any way that we show God our love. When we admire and express our enjoyment of God's creation, we worship God. We can praise God for the world around us, for the grass, the oceans, the mountains, and the foliage. However, we need to be careful to worship the Creator and not fall into the trap of worshipping the creation.

Overview, Objectives, and Materials You'll Need

Core Elements

+Into the Story

5 min.

› None

In the Beginning

Consider the way things began.

+Learning the Story

20 min.

› Bibles
› Pens or pencils
› Optional: printed copies of the Bible text

Order Out of Chaos

Follow the ordered account of creation.

Living the Story

10 min.

› Bibles
› Activity Sheet #4-1.A

Worship the Creator

Worship with a liturgy on Psalm 8.

+Sending the Story

5 min.

› None

Short on time?
Items marked +
can be adjusted to be done with
what you probably already
have in your pocket or
classroom.

Extending the Learning:

<p>Hands On Blessings Salad <i>Combining fruits for a blessing salad.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fresh fruit > Table covering > Cutting boards > Knives > Non-latex gloves > Bowls > Paper plates > Plastic utensils
<p>Mixed Media Make Me a Blessing <i>Add verses to "Make Me a Blessing."</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > "Make Me a Blessing" recording > "Make Me a Blessing" lyrics > Music player > White board or poster paper > Markers > Paper > Pens or pencils
<p>+The Competitive Edge Creation Chaos <i>Organize the steps of creation.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Bibles > Activity Sheet #4-1.B > Paper > Pens or pencils
<p>Simply Serving Blessed to Bless <i>Pass along creation blessings.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Yarn looms > Yarn > Bottled water > Index cards > Markers > Single hole punch
<p>+Worship Connection Worship a Creative and Orderly God <i>Contribute to a creative and orderly worship experience.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Bibles
<p>+Discussion Guide God's Good Creation <i>Discuss today's story.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Youth Discussion Guide

Into the Story:

In the Beginning (5 minutes)

Considering the ways things began.

DURING CLASS:

1. **Welcome to our first gathering of the fall season.** If you have met all summer, skip this step.
2. Go around the room and ask the youth to **complete the following sentence: At the beginning of the day I look or feel like _____.**
3. **What—if anything—changes as the morning progresses?** Allow time for answers.
4. **Sometimes beginnings are a bit messy, but things improve with time or effort. It may be our personal beginning to the morning, the beginning of a new school year, the beginning of a friendship, or the beginning of learning a new skill or sport. Can you think of some beginnings that were uncomfortable but later turned out to be something good, even blessings?** Allow time for answers.
5. **Today we start the beginning of our lectionary year with lessons that start in the beginning of the Bible.**
6. **Let's see what the beginning of our world was like for a God who has always been.**

Supplies:

> None

Learning the Story: Order Out of Chaos (20 minutes)

Following the ordered account of creation.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. For youth to get the most out of this lesson and become comfortable using their Bibles, it is recommended that youth have personal Bibles to mark in for this activity. If this is not possible for one or more youth, please provide printed copies of the day's Bible text.

Supplies:

- › Bibles
- › Pens or pencils
- › Optional: printed copies of the Bible text

DURING CLASS:

1. In this activity, the youth will take turns reading the Scripture one or more verses at a time. In the process, they will underline the words “blessed” and “given.” They will discuss how the various parts of creation are still blessings to us today. They will also discuss being created in God’s image and being blessed to be a blessing to others.
2. Note: there are differing opinions and beliefs about the way creation took place, as there are various interpretations of today’s reading. This activity works through the verses one by one, so the question and discussion naturally go in the order of the days as written in Genesis. The focus of the following material is God’s goodness and creative power being a blessing to humankind.
3. **Today we are beginning our new lectionary year at the beginning of the Bible.**
4. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1-2.
5. **The “wind from God” is often translated as God’s spirit.**
6. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:3-5.
7. **How would you define “blessed”?** [*Shown favor; treated special; given something; made happy; honored; etc.*]
8. **In what ways do you feel blessed as a result of the first day’s creation?** [*Glad to have night for rest; like to do things in the light of day, etc.*]
9. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:6-8.
10. **In what ways do you feel blessed as a result of the second day’s creation?** [*Enjoy airplane trips in the sky; like to look up and see the sky go on and on; etc.*]
11. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:9-13.
12. **In what ways do you feel blessed as a result of the third day’s creation?** [*All that had been created and how youth interact with it today.*]
13. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:14-19.
14. **In what ways do you feel blessed as a result of the fourth day’s creation?** [*All that had been created and how youth interact with it today.*]
15. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:20-23.

16. **In what ways do you feel blessed as a result of the fifth day's creation?** *[All that had been created and how youth interact with it today.]*
17. **What does Scripture say God did after creating the living creatures?** *[Blessed them].*
Underline "God blessed them."
18. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:24-31.
19. **In what ways do you feel blessed as a result of the fifth day's creation?** *[All that had been created and how youth interact with it today.]*
20. **What is different in the way God created humankind from all other creation?** *[Humankind was made in God's image.]*
21. **What does it mean to you that you are made in God's image?** *[A certain connection with God, a sense of importance to God; they may want to list things they know about God and consider how we are and are not like God.]*
22. **After creating humans, what did God do for them?** *[Blessed them.]* **Underline "God blessed them."**
23. **What did God give to the humans?** *[Plants, trees, animals, birds, any creation that has life.]*
Underline "I have given you" in verse 29 and "I have given" in verse 30.
24. **When you consider all that God created and blessed us with, what sense of responsibility or respect do you feel toward God's creation?** *[An obligation to take better care of the planet, the endangered animals, etc.]*
25. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 2:1-4.
26. **What did God do on the day of rest?** *[He blessed it.]* **Underline "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (verse 3).**
27. **The Creator blessed the creation and the created. In what ways can those who have been blessed pass along those blessings to others?**

Living the Story:

Worship the Creator (10 minutes)

Worship with a Liturgy on Psalm 8.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Make copies of Activity Sheet #4-1.A, one per youth.

Supplies:

- › Bibles
- › Activity Sheet #4-1.A

DURING CLASS:

1. Ask for a youth volunteer to be the liturgy leader.
2. Break into two groups.
3. Use Activity Sheet #4-1.A as a form of worship.
4. After the liturgy, ask the youth **what are some words you can say to God—words you use in your daily conversations when referring to something great—to continue to worship God throughout the week?**

Hands On:

Blessing Salad (15 minutes)

Combine fruits for a blessings salad.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Before serving any food, always check with participants or caregivers for students who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.
2. Gather supplies.
3. Wash the fruit.

DURING CLASS:

1. In this activity, the youth will identify the fruit that God created. Then, they will get creative and use the fruit (whole or cut) to represent other parts of creation. For example, a banana can look like a smile, or in the other direction like a hill or mountain. Apple slices can look like crescent moons. An orange can represent the sun. The white pith on orange slices can resemble veins in the body. Peeling a grapefruit can be like a rain shower. The youth can cut fruit into any shape to represent a part of creation. After identifying creation through the fruit and slices, the fruit will be placed in bowls. Instead of using salad dressing before eating, the youth will pray a salad blessing, thanking God for all of creation and how it has blessed us.
2. **Please wear plastic gloves when working with the fruit. We will be eating the fruit at the end of this activity.**
3. **How many parts of creation can you identify and list using the fruit in front of you? First use the fruit as a whole—a grape can represent a grape. Then use the fruit to represent various things. A grape can represent an eye or a teardrop. After exhausting your ideas for the fruit as a whole, cut the fruit and use what you cut to represent a part of creation. Half of a grape can represent a knuckle or a snail.**
4. After all the fruit is cut, **place the fruit in this bowl and mix it up.**
5. **Now you can enjoy the fruits of your labor, a fruit salad snack. Instead of pouring salad dressing over it, we are going to pray a salad blessing over it.**
6. You or a volunteer can say a blessing thanking God for the many creative blessings in creation.

Supplies:

- > Fresh fruit
- > Tablecloth or covering
- > Cutting boards
- > Knives
- > Non-latex gloves
- > Bowls
- > Paper plates
- > Plastic utensils

Mixed Media:

Make Me a Blessing (15 minutes)

Add verses to “Make Me a Blessing.”

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Write on the white board or poster paper the chorus to “Make Me a Blessing.” You may find them in a hymnal or at a website such as http://www.hymnary.org/text/out_in_the_highways_and_by_ways_of_life
2. Find a recording of “Make Me a Blessing.” It is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leF9RserKko>
3. Website hyperlinks are provided for your convenience and are correct and relevant at the time of publication but may not be at the time of use.

Supplies

- › “Make Me a Blessing” recording
- › “Make Me a Blessing” lyrics
- › White board or poster paper
- › Markers
- › Paper
- › Pens or pencils

DURING CLASS:

1. In this activity, the youth will listen to or sing the hymn “Make Me a Blessing” (or one similar if you have a favorite blessing song). Youth will consider where they spend their time and who they see or meet along the way. With this in mind, they will compose their own verses to “Make Me a Blessing.”
2. Distribute paper and pens or pencils.
3. **Using the paper and pencil I gave you, list places you were last week, including every room and spot you can remember.**
4. **Now list the people you saw. Name those you know, and identify the others in some way (for example, lady walking dog near the bus stop).**
5. Play the recording of “Make Me a Blessing.”
6. **Consider all of the places you were last week and all of the people you saw. Consider where you may be this coming week and the people you may see.**
7. **In groups of two, write a new verse for this song, one that relates to you being a blessing where you go and who you see.**
8. After allowing time for the writing, **you do not have to sing this unless you want to, but it would be a blessing to hear you read the verses that you wrote.**
9. After each verse is shared, sing the chorus (on the whiteboard) as a group.
10. **As you go about the coming week, continue to ask God to make you a blessing to someone, and keep your eyes and ears open to opportunities.**

The Competitive Edge:

Creation Chaos (15 minutes)

Organize the steps of creation.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Determine how many teams will work best for your group.
2. Print Activity Sheet #4-1.B, one copy per team. Use a different color paper for each team.
3. Cut the cards.
4. Scatter the cards around the room where they are visible but in odd places, possibly mixed with other objects.

Supplies:

- › Bibles
- › Activity Sheet #4-1.B
- › Paper
- › Pens or pencils

DURING CLASS:

1. In this activity, there will be a mess (chaos) for the youth to work through to find clue cards for what was created on each day. They will work together to find the cards they need, arrange and list them in order on paper. They will then use their Bibles to confirm that the order matches the account in Genesis. After the game, teams will be asked why they think certain things were created before other things. Would it matter in the end?
2. Assign one of the colors of paper to each team. **The objective of this game is to find the cards that represent various days of creation based on the account in Genesis. After you find each of the seven cards that you need, list them in order on your paper. Write your names on the paper, fold it, and place it on this table.**
3. After all of the folded papers are on the table, **use your Bibles to check your answers to see if they match Genesis chapters 1 and 2.**
4. **There are different beliefs about creation—what constitutes a day, what details took place and how—but we can all appreciate God’s creation and enjoy the blessings that accompany it.**

Simply Serving:

Blessed to Bless (15 minutes)

Pass along creation blessings.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Gather looms. You may be able to borrow them from parishioners, assuming the youth will be responsible to return them if they take them home to finish their work. If not, looms are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased at fabric, yarn, and craft stores.
2. Make arrangements to deliver the hats and water bottles to a local organization that reaches out to the homeless.

Supplies

- › Yarn looms
- › Yarn
- › Bottled water
- › Index cards
- › Markers
- › Single hole punch

DURING CLASS:

1. **Consider the kinds of things God gave us in creation: light, warmth, water. What can we do to share those blessings with others?**
2. **We have some yarn looms that are fun and easy to work with. Those of you who want to share blessings by making hats for the homeless can choose a color yarn and a loom.**
3. **We also have water bottles, markers, and index cards for those who want to make message cards to attach to water bottles for the homeless. Attach the card by punching a hole and using yarn to tie it to the bottle.**
4. Show the youth how to use the looms. (Instructions usually come with the looms but can also be located online by searching “loom knitting instructions” or “loom knit simple hat.”) The work goes fast, and a hat can be made in a short amount of time, but probably not in fifteen minutes. Encourage the youth to finish the hats at home and bring them back next week, so you can show them how to remove the hats from the loom.
5. **How do you feel when you share your blessings with others?**

Worship Connection:

Worship a Creative and Orderly God (15 minutes)

Contribute to a creative and orderly worship experience.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. If you are going to share this worship experience with the children or the congregation, make arrangements.

Supplies

› Bibles

DURING CLASS:

1. This activity involves some youth in a creative movement worship presentation as some other youth identify the order of God's creation. This can be used for worship among the youth, for the children, or in the church service.
2. **Genesis shows us that God can be both creative and orderly. According to Genesis 1:26, we were created in God's image. We are going to worship our creative and orderly God in a creative and orderly way.**
3. Youth will define the movement in the next several steps. Allow them to be free to move as they decide. Divide the youth into groups. Ask some groups to use creative movement to represent the creative flow of creation. Ask other groups to use movement to represent the orderly aspect of creation.
4. **Work in groups to develop your own worship experience that celebrates creation and that glorifies our creative and orderly God.**
5. Tell one group: **Using your own creative moves to represent creation, express the creative side of the story. You may all take different parts in this or you may all do the same thing. That is up to you. One may speak while the others use movements. Again, that is up to you.**
6. Tell the other group: **Using a more orderly approach, identify the order of God's creation using the step by step Genesis account. You may choose to read Bible verses or parts of verses and create motions to go along with them. How you do this is up to you. That is just one idea.**

Sending the Story (5 minutes)

Review the lesson:

God's blessings began with the careful work of creating an ordered world.

- **What was orderly and what was creative about God's handiwork?** [*The step by step or day by day account indicates order as does the placement of the parts of creation. Each thing that was created is full of creativity.*]
- **In what ways has that ordered world been a blessing to you?**
- **In what ways can you use the blessings of God's ordered world to bless others?**

Close with a prayer that shares the blessings. With permission, gently place your hand on top of a youth's head and pray, **The Lord bless you and keep you.** That youth will do the same to the next person, and so on until everyone has been blessed and has blessed another.

Remember to send "The Story @ Home" take home sheet with students before dismissing them.



God's Good Creation

Unit 1: God Provides Blessings

Youth Discussion Page

If you break into small groups (or are a small group), use the following questions to discuss the day's Bible passage and how it relates to your lives. Make a copy of this sheet for each member of the group and provide pencils or pens. Encourage each other to take a moment to write your response in words or doodles before discussing out loud.

Start your time by going around your group and asking each member (adults included!) to share a high point and a low point from the past week.

Opening Prayer

Thank you, God, that one who is big and powerful enough to create the world also cares about each of us and is with us now. Amen.

Understand

- ? What series of events takes place in today's reading?
- ? What did God think about each part of creation?

Wrestle

- ? Describe God's presence before the world was created.
- ? Why are there so many explanations for how the world was created?

Share

- ? As someone who was created in God's image—a God who is both creative and orderly—what do you see most of in yourself, the creative side or the orderly side? Give examples.

Apply

- ? In what way can being created in God's image help you walk in confidence this coming week?
- ? In what way will knowing that all of what God created is good help you to see yourself differently than you did last week?

Worship the Creator

Worship with a Liturgy on Psalm 8.

Leader: O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Group 1: You are magnificent. You are awesome.

Group 2: You are the greatest. You are outstanding.

Leader: You have set your glory above the heavens.

Group 1: You are the greatest. You are outstanding.

Group 2: You are magnificent. You are awesome.

Group 1: You are greater than great.

Group 2: You are higher than the highest heavens.

Leader: I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established.

Group 1: Who are we that a great and powerful creator like you wants to take time to care for us?

Group 2: Who are we that a great and powerful being like you takes time to think about us?

Leader: You have made us a little lower than you.

Group 1: You have crowned us with glory and honor.

Group 2: You have given us control over your creation.

Leader: I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established.

Group 1: Who are we that a great and powerful God like you wants to take time to care for us?

Group 2: Who are we that a great and powerful God like you takes time to think about us?

Leader: O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Group 1: You are magnificent. You are awesome.

Group 2: You are the greatest. You are outstanding.

All: O LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

Group 1: Awesome, powerful, caring, loving God.

Group 2: Creative, giving, magnificent, loving God.

Leader: I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established.

All: O LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

Creation Chaos

Organizing the steps of creation.

Light	Sun, Moon, Stars
Firmament/Heaven	Sea Creatures, Birds
Dry Land/Earth; Grass, Herbs, Trees	Beasts/Animals, Man/Humanity
Rest	



The Story @ Home + Youth #4-1 + Genesis 1:1-2:4a
God's Good Creation

Unit 1: God Provides Blessings

THIS WEEK

This is the first week, in some cases Rally Day, where we start at the beginning of the Narrative Lectionary with the story of creation (Genesis 1:1-2:4a).

The Point

God declares that creation is good.

Bible Nuts & Bolts:

A Brief History of the Bible, Part 1: Old Testament

The Old Testament contains the first 39 books in the Protestant Bible. It is a collection of ancient texts that were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek and later translated to other languages, including English. The writing of the Old Testament spanned 500 years. The Christian Old Testament is divided into categories: the Law, the History, the Poetry, and the Prophets (major and minor). Although the individual books in the Old Testament are separate writings, collectively they tell a story of a loving God who wants a relationship with humanity.

Story Summary

In the beginning, God made order out of chaos. God began with nothing and created the world and all that is in it through a step by step process. That ordered process demonstrated care for the big picture and care for the details. As God paused to view the progress after each step (or each day), God was pleased that it was good. God was uniquely involved in preparing good things in creation to be a blessing to humanity. We are a part of God's creation, created in God's image, and as God continues to bless us, we can be a blessing to others as well.

Practice: Worship

Worship is any way that we show God our love. When we admire and express our enjoyment of God's creation, we worship God. We can praise God for the world around us, for the grass, the oceans, the mountains, and the foliage. As a family, enjoy the outdoors through a walk or an outdoor game. At various times in this experience, take turns thanking God for specific parts of creation around you.

NEXT WEEK

Next week we will hear about the life of Abraham, specifically when he faces a test of faith. We will see God's care and blessing through both a relationship and a redeeming moment (Genesis 21:1-3; 22:1-14).

Going Deeper

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? Consider the following basic pattern as a way of forming family devotions:

- ✠ Light a candle to help you focus this time as "God time." Pray a simple prayer together.
- ✠ Take a moment to check in with each other; what are each person's "highs" and "lows" today?
- ✠ Read aloud from the Daily Bible Readings from below. Discuss the questions following each.
- ✠ End with a blessing, by simply tracing a cross on each other's forehead. The Lord's Prayer is a good way to end your devotion time. If you used a candle, extinguish it as a sign of the end of the devotions.

Note: This is only a suggested pattern. It will vary with your household's context and patterns. What works best for you? First thing in the morning? Over breakfast? Bed time? Be creative and flexible with how you practice and keep your devotions!

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday – Read Genesis 1:1-2:4a

God was pleased with the entire creation and called it good.

- What does it mean to you to be created in God's image?
- What is your favorite part of creation?

Monday –

Read Genesis 2:7-9, 15, 18-25

Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to farm and take care of the land.

- What is your responsibility in taking care of God's creation?
- Why were Adam and Eve without shame?

Tuesday – Read Genesis 3:8-19

Sin changed humanity's role as farmer as well as humanity's relationship with God.

- What consequences have you experienced for choices you made?
- When have you blamed someone else for your struggles or actions?

Wednesday – Read Genesis 12:1-9

God called Abram to leave all that he knew and follow God to a land God knew. Along with that call was a promise for great blessings.

- What would you be able to walk away from in order to follow God's call?
- Why do we receive blessings from God?

Thursday – Read Genesis 15:1-6

God made a covenant with Abram, promising that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars.

- How many cousins do you have?
- If we are descendants of Abram (Abraham), who are our brothers and sisters?

Friday – Read Genesis 17:15-21

God changed Abram's name to Abraham (Gen. 17:5) and Sarai's to Sarah (Gen. 17:15). God promised them a son who would continue the covenant.

- When have you laughed so hard you could have rolled on the ground?
- If your name was an adjective, what would you want it be?

Saturday – Read Genesis 18:1-15

The Lord appeared to Abraham through three visitors near the trees at Mamre.

- When could the words, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" be an encouragement to you?
- What food would you serve if God visited you?