



LIVING THE WORD

*Exploring God's Story Together
Narrative Lectionary, Year 4*



Worship Guide

Sample Guide

Lesson #4-1—September 12, 2021

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Lesson #4-1

GOD'S GOOD CREATION

Genesis 1:1-2:4a



Key Verse:

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

The Point:

God declares that creation is good.

Making Connections:

God Provides Blessings

Spiritual Practice:

Worship



WORSHIP @ A GLANCE

WORSHIP ELEMENT

SUPPLIES

GATHERING

WELCOMING TIME: KINGDOMS OF CREATION

Honor different plants and animals.

10 MIN. † Activity Sheet #4-1.A

OPENING PRAYER

2 MIN. † None

LITANY

5 MIN. † None

WORD

MAKING CONNECTIONS: BLESSINGS AROUND US

Create a blessing jar.

10 MIN. † Large jar
† Strips of paper
† Pens or pencils
† Optional: stickers and ribbons,
background music

LEARNING THE STORY: GOD'S GOOD CREATION

Create storyboard collages.

20 MIN. † Bible
† Sticky notes in a variety of colors
† Markers or crayons
† Black poster board
† Easel

LIVING THE STORY: CREATION SONGS

Learn about creation songs.

10 MIN. † Activity Sheet #4-1.B
† Optional: hymnals, Internet-connected
device and paper or projector

WORSHIP @ A GLANCE

MEAL

OFFERING

10 MIN. † Strips of paper
† Pens or pencils

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

5 MIN. † Blessing jar from Making Connections

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

2 MIN. † None

SENDING

CLOSING PRAYER

5 MIN. † None

BLESSING

1 MIN. † None

AT HOME

VARIES † Sharing God's Story @ Home



LIVING THE WORD

*Exploring God's Story Together
Narrative Lectionary, Year 4*

Cross+Generational Ministry has at its core the concept that faith is formed through meaningful relationships. When we connect with people of a different generation, we are able to learn from them and share our own experiences, no matter what age we are. We find our place in God's story best by exploring that story as community.

Effective cross+generational experiences are:

- Experiential*
- Interactive*
- Engaging*
- Story-centered*
- Home-based*
- Equalizing*

all of which promote an **encounter with God**. All of the activities included in this leader guide are intended to engage these principles, through intentional cross+generational interaction and active, creative activities that bring the Bible story to life in our lives.

We pass on the faith through every action, experience, or relationship that nurtures a transformative relationship of trust with God and shapes the way we see and interact with God's world. When we do this in meaningful, intergenerational relationships, our faith is enriched from the diversity of the experiences we share with each other. Our communities are strengthened, and we have confidence in our sense of belonging to God and with each other.

BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Making Connections

The story of humanity's relationship with the living God is a story of blessing upon blessing, and these blessings are never more clear than in the beginning, as the narrative unfolds. As we read the story of creation, we become aware that God has blessed us with not only resources and companions, but with the responsibility to care for each.

Story Summary:

God's Good Creation

As we begin our program year, we celebrate beginnings: the beginning of creation, the beginnings of life on earth, and the beginning of humanity's relationship with God. This, the first of two creation stories found in Genesis, sets forth a description of each "day" (metaphorical period of time), always ending with the litany-like response of "And God saw that it was good." God created earth, all of its vegetation and elements, and animals, and created and blessed humanity, and gave them the responsibility to care for the rest of creation. The word that is often translated as "have dominion over" can be more accurately understood as "having responsibility for" or even "serving." Our responsibility to care for creation is as servant leaders, rather than dominators. In the story of creation on the seventh day, after creating all that is, God rested, and established the expectation that we, too, rest from our labors regularly.

The Point

God declares that creation is good. Our fundamental understanding of God is based in our understanding of God's creating power. Not only did God create all that is, but God saw that it was "good," and then gave humanity the responsibility and privilege of caring for God's workmanship. We are blessed not just with the abundance of God's creation, but simply because we were the ones created to care for it.

Spiritual Practice: Worship

Worship is our natural response to God's blessings. When God provides, we rejoice and honor God with our song, prayer, and devotion. Worship comes in many different shapes and forms, and we will explore many different ways to worship the Creating God who blesses us throughout this unit.



WORSHIP PLAN



GATHERING

Cross+Generational Worship will look different in each different setting. Some congregations may worship in stationary seating, such as pews. Others may have a more flexible space. These suggestions are offered with these diverse settings in mind. The times indicated are just estimates, and you can take more or less time as you see fit. Feel free to adapt each element to fit your setting, remembering that the more you can engage the principles of Cross+Generational Ministry, the more vibrant and effective your worship can be.

WELCOMING TIME: KINGDOMS OF CREATION (10 MINUTES)

Honor different plants and animals.

You will need:

- † Activity Sheet #4-1.A

Before class:

1. Make copies of Activity Sheet #4-1.A, one for every three worshippers.
2. Place these images on seats throughout your worship space, so that there is one image for every two to four seats.

During class:

1. **Welcome to worship! As we begin our program year together we want to make sure that we introduce ourselves to the people around us. There may be some new people here who do not know anyone, or some others who might like a reminder of everyone's name. Make sure you introduce yourself with your first and last name.**
2. **After you have introduced yourselves, take a look at the image that you all have on the paper near you. This animal or plant is an important part of God's creation! As groups of two to four, come up with three to five points describing how this animal or plant is important to all of creation.**

3. After all have finished: **Today we will read about beginnings. We will learn about the many animals and plants that God blessed the earth with at creation. We will consider how God blesses us through creation, and we will worship God in thanks!**

OPENING PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

Creator of Life, we come to worship to honor you and to praise your name. Be in our worship today, and inspire us to see your glorious hand in all of creation. Bless our time together and equip us to care for the world you so lovingly crafted. In your name we pray. Amen.

LITANY (5 MINUTES)

We begin our worship today by honoring the blessings of creation. I will read a petition that declares a wonder of creation. I will end by saying, “And God...” You will respond: “Saw that it was good!”

Leader: On the first day, God created heaven and earth, light and dark, night and day.
And God...

All: Saw that it was good!

Leader: On the second day, God created water and sky. And God...

All: Saw that it was good!

Leader: On the third day, God created earth and sea, plants and trees. And God...

All: Saw that it was good!

Leader: On the fourth day, God created sun, stars, and moon. And God...

All: Saw that it was good!

Leader: On the fifth day, God created swimming creatures and flying creatures. And God...

All: Saw that it was good!

Leader: On the sixth day, God created animals of the land, including humans, and gave humans all of creation to care for. And God...

All: Saw that it was good!

Leader: And on the seventh day, God rested, and expects us all to rest! And God...

All: Saw that it was good!

WORD

MAKING CONNECTIONS: BLESSINGS AROUND US (10 MINUTES)

Create a blessing jar.

You will need:

- † Large jar
- † Strips of paper
- † Pens or pencils
- † Optional: stickers and ribbons, background music

Before worship:

1. Prepare strips of paper.
2. Place the jar in a prominent place in the front of the worship space. Optional: place stickers and ribbons around it for people to choose.
3. If you would like background music on while people are writing and adding to the jar, either prepare a recording or ask your musician to play something quiet.

During worship:

1. **As we get into reading our story today, and over the next few weeks, we will notice a recurring theme: blessings. God has blessed us by providing an abundance of resources for us and has also blessed us by giving us the responsibility to care for them. We will hear story after story of God's blessings.**
2. **Today, we will begin our focus on blessings by creating a blessing jar.**
3. Have ushers hand out a strip of paper and a pen or pencil to each worshipper.
4. **Take a moment to consider the blessings you have experienced this week. Some blessings are big and obvious, like getting a new job, or receiving praise for something you did. Other blessings are not as obvious or come out of a time of difficulty. Still other blessings are right in front of us, like our homes, families, and friends, and we forget to appreciate them. Write down one blessing you have experienced this week. Bring it up front and place it in the blessing jar. Someone will pray for your blessing later.**
5. Optional: **If you would like, put a sticker on the jar or tie a ribbon around it when you put your blessing inside.**

LEARNING THE STORY: GOD'S GOOD CREATION (20 MINUTES)

Create a storyboard collages.

You will need:

- † Bible
- † Sticky notes in a variety of colors
- † Markers or crayons
- † Black poster board
- † Easel

Before worship:

1. Place a set of sticky notes and markers or crayons at the end of pews or rows.
2. Place the black poster board on an easel at the front of the worship space. If your group is particularly large, you may wish to have more than one black poster board, and a plan as to where each assigned section should post their drawings.
3. Recruit a volunteer to read the story, or plan to read it yourself.

During worship:

1. **Our story today paints a vivid image about creation and the amazing acts that God did creating all that is. We are going to create our own group collage image depicting the story of creation.**
2. By rows (or other groupings as best suits your setting), assign sections of your worship space one of the following categories: earth, water, sun, moon, plants, fish, bird, land animal, or human. If there are many groups, assign the same categories to multiple groups. If there are fewer, assign multiple categories to the same group.
3. Distribute the sticky notes and markers or crayons as appropriate for your context.
4. **Please draw an example of the category you are assigned on a sticky note. For example, you can draw a giraffe if you have the “animal” category or a rose for the “plant” category.**
5. **As we read today’s story, when we get to the item you drew, please come up and place your drawing on the poster board.**
6. Give worshippers 5 minutes to work, and then read (or invite a volunteer to read) the story. The story will need to be read slowly, pausing after each new creation for worshippers to come to the front to place their drawings on the poster board.

7. After the story is told, discuss the follow questions as a group:
- **Why do you think creation is described as happening in the order that it is?**
 - **What does God think about each thing that is created?** [*It is good.*]
 - **How might that affect how you view the world?**
 - **What stands out to you in this reading?**
 - **What do you do to rest from your work?**

LIVING THE STORY: CREATION SONGS (10 MINUTES)

Learn about creation songs.

You will need:

- † Activity Sheet #4-1.B
- † Optional: hymnals, Internet-connected device and paper or projector

Before worship:

1. Choose two or three songs from those listed on Activity Sheet #4-1.B. Include any other creation songs you are familiar with. You may use songs in the style most familiar to worshippers or choose songs from a diversity of styles.
2. Search the Internet for the lyrics, and print or prepare projection of the lyrics.
3. Please ensure you have the proper copyright permissions before using particular songs.

During worship:

1. **There are many songs and hymns that use the images and ideas of creation as their inspiration. Music is one way that we, as humans, can work as creators, too, and glorify God. Some songs refer to the specific animals and wonders that God created in the beginning. Others are more general songs of praise that glorify God for being the One who created everything.**
2. **Let's compare a few of these songs and see what they have in common.**
3. Hand out or project the lyrics to two or three songs.
4. **Discuss the following questions with your group:**
 - **Are any plants, animals, or other wonders (earth, stars, moon, etc.) named in this song?**
 - **What images stand out?**
 - **How is God described?**
 - **If you were to write a song about creation, what are a few words or images you would use?**
5. Optional: If you use hymnals, invite worshippers to open them and find other hymns about creation. If your musician is up for it, you may choose to sing one of those chosen on the spot!

MEAL

OFFERING (10 MINUTES)

You will need:

- † Strips of paper
- † Pens or pencils

Invite worshippers to create a few verses that honor the God of creation, write them on a strip of paper, and to place them in the offering. (Possibly a musician or poet can weave them together into a corporate composition at a later time.)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (5 MINUTES)

You will need:

- † Blessing jar from Making Connections

Invite worshippers to draw a blessing out of the blessing jar, and offer a prayer (aloud or silently) in thanksgiving for the blessing, as well as for the person who wrote about the blessing (even if they do not know who the person is).

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

Blessed are you, O Lord, creator of all blessings. Your hand moved over the waters at the beginning of time, and your great imagination blessed us with all that is and all that has ever been. You crafted the land, the sky, the light and the dark. You composed the fish, birds, mammals, trees, and plants. You created a humanity that often falls short of your expectation, but at just the right time you sent your Son to redeem what we had rendered imperfect. We are blessed that in the night in which he was betrayed...

COMMUNION (OPTIONAL)

One way to reinforce the connections amongst the community, and our responsibility to each other, is by having the congregation serve communion to each other. This can be done while the congregation is at their seats. It is helpful to have a communion assistant to hold the wine while people offer the bread, and to help the bread and wine move smoothly from one row, section, or table to another.

SENDING

CLOSING PRAYER (3 MINUTES)

Encourage participants to hold hands or touch elbows with those next to them, connecting the entire congregation. Begin and end the prayer, but leave enough silence in the middle for people to participate. You can remind worshippers that even if two people pray at once or someone cannot be heard, God hears all our prayers.

Loving Creator, we thank you for the blessings you bestow on us every day. You blessed us all back when you created life, and you continue to bless us in the new life we are given in you. We know that we often forget how blessed we are, and we act ungrateful. Please hear the prayers of confession that we offer now, aloud or silently. Pause for petitions of confession. We know that you hear our prayers and that you forgive all of our sins, all of the ways we fall short. Strengthen us and send us out to bless a world in need. Amen.

BLESSING (1 MINUTE)

Invite worshippers to turn to the people on either side of them, make the sign of the cross on their hand or forehead with permission, and repeat the following: **God knows you, and calls you Good.**

AT HOME (5 MINUTES)

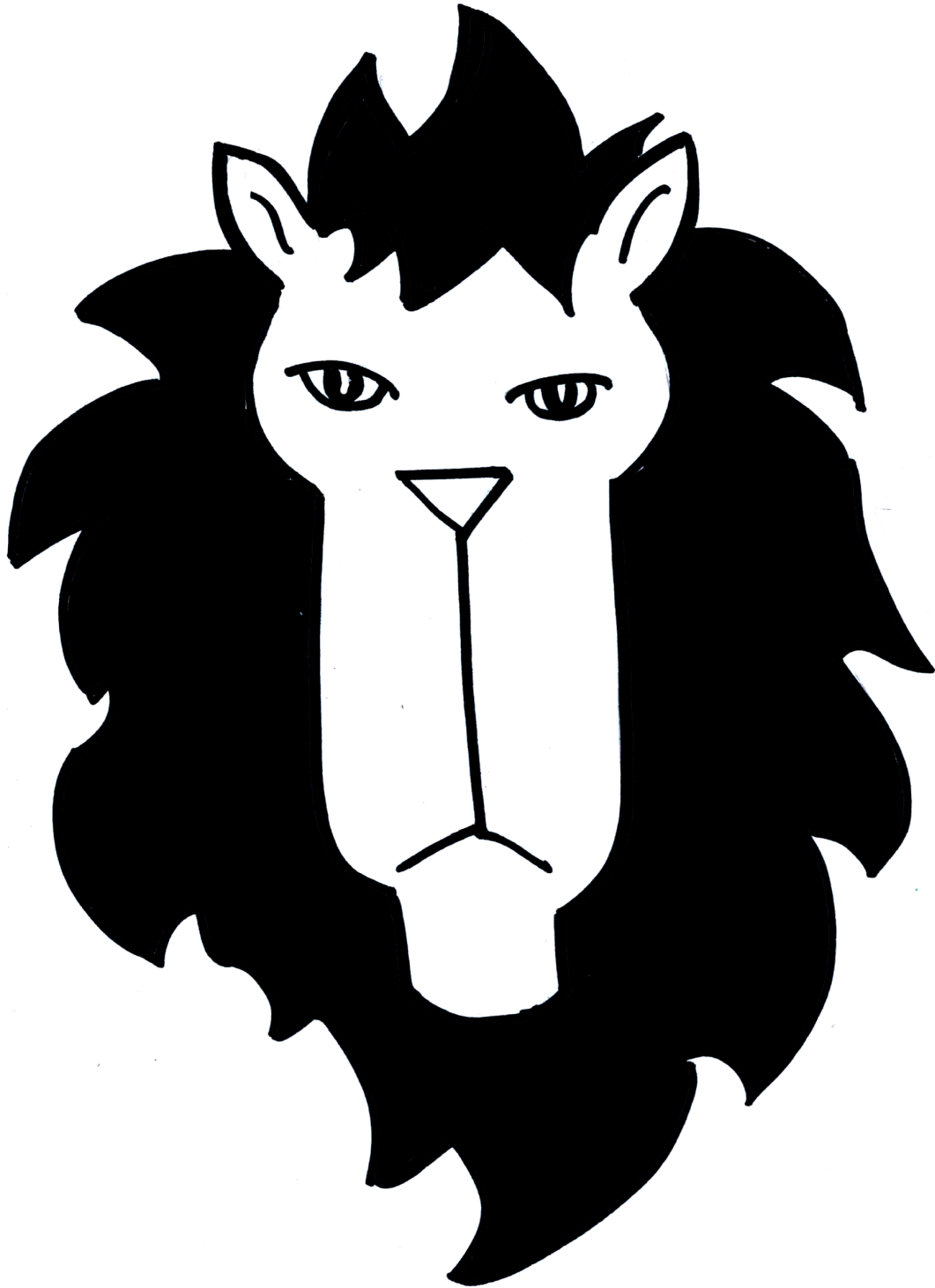
If your congregation is using the “Sharing God’s Story @ Home” insert, remember to hand them out before they leave worship.

This week:

- ✝ Create a blessing jar, and add a new blessing you become aware of each day. Pray for them, thanking God for each throughout the week.
- ✝ Intentionally look for an opportunity to be a blessing to someone else.
- ✝ Create a silhouette collage of your favorite animal or plant.

KINGDOMS OF CREATION

Honor different plants and animals.



The full lesson includes a total of 12 Kingdoms of Creation illustrated pages.

CREATION SONGS

Learn about creation songs.

Hymns

“How Great Thou Art”

“Beautiful Savior”

“Creating God, Your Fingers Trace”

“God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale”

Praise Songs

“The Earth Is Yours” by Gungor

“Let Creation Sing” by Hillsong

“Countless Wonders” by Chris Tomlin

Fun Songs

“Hip-Hip-Hippopotamus”

All Things Bright and Beautiful”

“A Great, Gray Elephant”