

The Story of Creation

Bible Background and Lesson Objectives

The Story of Creation



Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

A Rotation.org Writing Team Lesson Set

Scripture:

[Genesis 1:1 - 2:3](#) (NIV)

Key Verse: [Genesis 1:27](#) (NIV)

*"So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them."*

(See note at end of this Bible Background about the choice of the NIV)

Lesson Set Learning Objectives:

- To know the "story" of Genesis 1:1-2:3—which is not merely a list of days and things created, but a wonderful description of who God is, what God is like, and what God wants.
- To understand what it means to be created in the image of God, that we are made to love and care for God's Creation and each other.

- To express your own joy toward God for the loving gift of Creation and life.

What is the “story” of Creation?

It’s not uncommon to reduce a lesson about Genesis 1 to a list of what happened each day, have the kids color it in, and call it “good.” But that doesn’t teach the lesson of the Creation story.

The **story** of Creation that emerges from the words, images, and drama of **Genesis 1 is the story of who God is**, what God is like, and what God wants—and therefore, who WE are.



God loves to create.

God loves Creation.

God loves us.

God wants us to be creative.

God wants us to love all Creation and its creatures.

And God wants us to love him and each other.

This is who God is and who God wants us to be.

And this is what it means to be made in God’s “image” ([Genesis 1:27](#)) that each of us has been lovingly and joyfully created with the capacity to love and care just like our Creator loves and cares.

Made in the image or “likeness” of God means each of us has been specially made to bring light to the world, create and care for it, and celebrate the good in every day and every person. (For everyone was created by God and they too have God's image within them.)

It has been said that the rest of Genesis and the Old Testament “merely” describe how we ignored the lessons of the Creation story by denying who God is and refusing to do what God wants. Starting with the prophets and Gospels, we learn what God is going to do about this denial and refusal. Rather than abandon Creation and those created in his

image, God will choose to restore Creation and its creatures by redeeming them through the story of Jesus.

Jesus literally and figuratively embodies the God we first meet in the story of Creation ([Colossians 1:15](#)). Jesus is the full image of God, showing us what God is like, and living the way God wants us to live. Jesus called this vision for Creation, "The Kingdom of God" and called us to participate in its creation.

A look at the interesting text of the story

The central focus of the story of Creation is God. The story's seven-day structure and repeated phrases, such as "*and God saw that it was good,*" are dramatic storytelling techniques that help us remember God's acts of creative love.

Scholars tell us that Genesis 1's form, phrasing, and vocabulary are not like those we find in a typical Bible narrative or history, such as the stories of Exodus or Judges. Rather, the language, structure, and use of repetition in the Creation story are more like a Hebrew psalm—a song or poem designed to inspire awe and wonder.

Studying the text and structure of the passage reminds us that we are reading something more than what some would call "history." The text itself signals that a deeper truth is being spoken here, a truth that transcends arguments about the "factual" accuracy of the text, or what happened on what day, or how long a "day" was. You don't have to believe in a literal seven-day creation to understand the deeper truth being spoken in Genesis 1, any more than you have to believe you are a sheep to understand the truth of Psalm 23.

For more about the structure and meaning of this story, *watch this excellent overview of Genesis 1 from the Bible Project.* 🎧 It's downloadable from [their website](#) and suitable for use with older students too. They've also posted their video on [YouTube](#).

A few of the surprising words in Genesis 1

When we look at [all the possible English translations](#) of Genesis 1:1-2:3, we are quickly reminded that this scripture is a rich and ancient Hebrew text that holds many possible nuances and even the occasional surprise. Below are some of the more interesting words that will not only expand your own understanding but can be shared with students when the opportunity presents itself.

➡ **"Hover"** ("Rechalph" in Hebrew) Was God hovering or dancing over the waters?

[Genesis 1:2](#) uses the Hebrew word "rechalph" to describe the movement of God's Spirit over the waters of Creation. Various Bibles translate "rechalph" as "hover," "moved," or "swept." But in Hebrew, the word "[rechalph](#)" literally means "to shake, flutter, or relax."

Thesauruses suggest "rock," "sway," and even "shimmy" as English [synonyms](#) for what God was doing at the moment of creation. **So... was God *dancing* at the moment of Creation?** What an exciting possibility! And if you grew up with the hymn "Lord of the Dance," it's not out of the realm of possibilities.

*I danced in the morning
When the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon
And the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven
And I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem
I had my birth.*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he*

Lyrics 1963, Sydney Carter.
The melody is from the song "Simple Gifts."
Listen at <https://youtu.be/4db0yvt7aZ0?t=14>.
Hear a congregation singing it: <https://youtu.be/7mgvzwXTpM4>

➡ **"Image"** ("Selem" in Hebrew) We are made in the Image, shade, character of God.

In [Genesis 1:27](#), we are created in the "[selem](#)" of God. "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them..."

Selem can also mean "shade," or "phantom," or "likeness." We are the "shade" of God? Phantom! This single word reminds us that **we are in the realm of the figurative**, not the literal. Shade is a wonderfully cool and peaceful place to be—especially if it is coming from God. We truly "*got it made in the shade!*"

What is God's Image? What are God's character and purpose? It's *love*. (See below for the [extended word study on "image."](#))

➡ **"Good"** ("Tov" in Hebrew) Good, Beautiful!

"...and God saw that it was TOV!"

The word "good" in Hebrew is "tov" (pronounced like "cove.") Its pronunciation has also come down through history as "tob." ("v" and "b" are often interchangeable). "Tov" doesn't just mean "good" in Hebrew; it can also mean "beautiful," "better," even "precious" or "rich." **Imagine God saying, "that's beautiful!"** instead of merely "good." Or, "that's better!" as God added more and more to Creation.

This emphasis on the "goodness" of Creation stands in stark contrast to some of the other creation stories told by other cultures, or how we sometimes feel when nature's power is on display. Our God and the world he created for us is FOR us, not against us, *"even when the waters roar and foam"* ([Ps 46](#)), we are not afraid because we know God is our refuge and shade 😊

Saying the Hebrew words "very good" is fun and sonoric: "meh-ode tov." (Hear [meh-ode](#) and [tov](#).)

➡ **"Rested"** ("Shabat" or "Sabbath" in Hebrew) Did God rest or celebrate on the 7th Day?

The Hebrew word for what God did on the seventh day is "[shabat](#)." We commonly translate this word as "sabbath rest," but it can also mean "celebrate." **Was God celebrating on the seventh day?** And what would that look like? 😊 Rest and celebrate are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they form the basis for why we worship and sing on our "day of rest."

➡ **"Done"** ("Asa" in Hebrew) God rested from all he had done, made, prepared, offered(!)

"Asa," the very last Hebrew word in the Genesis story ([Gen 2:3](#)), is usually translated as "done" or "made." However, the Hebrew word used here can also be translated as God rested from (or celebrated) what he had **"offered" or "prepared."**

Prepared for what? Offered to who? Celebrating for what reason? **Because God is not merely satisfied with setting Creation in motion and standing back.** Rather, God knows what's coming. God can see the whole arc of the story—the Fall and God's saving Advent into the world. On the seventh day of Creation, God the gift-giver pauses in anticipation and celebration not merely about what has been accomplished, but about the gift that is about to be opened, the dance that will "still go on."

Is Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 a Psalm (Song) of Joy?

Any way you translate it, **the first description of God in the Bible is one of creative joy**, the kind of joy that loves to paint with light and sky and fishies.

The kind of joy that makes fruit and calls the days "beautiful"—even Monday and even bad days because we still belong to God.

The kind of joy that makes people from stardust, infuses them with its likeness and then teaches their heart to sing the song of life.

Joyful, joyful, we adore You,
God of glory, Lord of love
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before You,
Op'ning to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!*



*All Your works with joy surround You,
Earth and heav'n reflect Your rays...*

*Mortals, join the mighty chorus,**
Which the morning stars began...*

(Excerpts from the hymn "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee")

*If you think of "Joyful" as God's name, it changes the song in a neat way.

**"Mighty" chorus was Henry Van Dyke's original lyric. Some hymnals use "happy."

Notes on the "Image" of God

"So God created mankind in his own image..." ([Gen 1:27](#))

Paul and the other writers of the New Testament, as well as the early "Church Fathers," wrote a lot about **what it means to be created in the image of God** and the image of Christ. Generally speaking, they defined "image" as **that part of us that is "like" God's character**: rational, moral, and having the capacity to love and be loved. This image is given to everyone, can grow through faith, is designed to do "good works" ([Eph 2:10](#)), and is eventually made "full" through resurrection. We are earthen vessels of this image.

Jesus both literally and figuratively embodied the "image" of God. He taught us that God is the shepherd who goes looking for every last sheep, is the parent who rejoices when the child returns, and is the one who stills storms and heals. Jesus taught us that to be made in the loving image of God means being willing to lay down your life for a friend ([John 15:13](#)). And he did just that by going to the cross for our lives and breaking open the tomb so that the love of God for each of us as individuals could continue.

[The Bible Project](#) has a wonderful 6-minute video about what the image of God means and how Jesus came to restore and renew that image. (It's a good resource for grades 3 and up too).

How to Explain the How God Created the Universe in Six Days

Few subjects can spark as much debate as to whether or not to read our Genesis 1 story literally, i.e., as a "historical" account describing how God created the universe in six actual days. It is a Rotation Model philosophy and Rotation.org policy that each church is responsible for adapting resources and the theology within to their own needs. Rotation.org has its roots in the Reformed and "mainline" church whose theology does not read Genesis 1 as literal history. The following explanation is for those of us who come from this tradition. If you do not agree with it, talk to your pastor.

1. It will come up! Children will naturally wonder, and marvel and ask questions about "how" God could have created the universe in just six days, which a "concrete" view of the text suggests. Keep your answer age-appropriate and simple. Remind them that the most important question is who and why.

2. One classic answer is to simply explain that the word "day" in Hebrew doesn't always mean 24 hours but can more poetically (figuratively) mean a period of time or "age" (epoch). This argument, however, misses the point that the text is not meant to be read technically, but devotionally.

3. Another answer is to teach children that some parts of the Bible were written as stories or poems, not history or eyewitness accounts. Jonah and the Whale, for example, or Psalm 23, or the Prodigal Son. They were written to inspire and help us remember important truths.

4. Another answer is that some scriptures reflect how ancient people understood the world differently than we do today. They didn't have science like we have today. They didn't know about the "Big Bang," or the age of rocks, or about dinosaurs, or the processes of evolution, or about bacteria and the cause of disease. We don't make fun of them, but instead, we listen for the truth God continues to speak through their ancient understanding.

Some lessons get into the weeds describing how the ancient Hebrews thought the earth, sky, and heavens/space were constructed, and you can see some of that info in the suggested videos.

The POINT of the six days poem is to tell us that the world is a precious gift, you are not an accident or mistake, and that God is still in charge. Or like the old hymn says:

*This is my father's world
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres**

*...and though the wrong seems oft so strong
God is the ruler yet!*

**It was once believed that orbiting planets emitted harmonious sounds which were poetically thought to be a sort of "song of creation." Today we understand that sound cannot travel through a vacuum, but the "song of Creation" still inspires.*

Did God tell us to "rule over" animals and "plow" on the Earth?

In [Genesis 1:26](#), our English translations tell us we were created to "**rule over**" the animals. "Have dominion" is how some older translations say it. In [Genesis 1:28](#), our English translations tell us we are to "**subdue the earth.**" Both "rule" and "subdue" are interesting words to consider.

The Hebrew word for "rule" is "[radah](#)" which can mean "*subjugate, tread down, take.*" To a farmer or shepherd, "rule" would mean "take care of."

The Hebrew for "subduing" the ground is the word '[kabash](#),' from which we get the colorful slang "kibosh" as in "put the kibosh" on someone (i.e., stop them). When that word is used elsewhere in the Old Testament it means to "*conquer, tread upon, stop, whip into submission.*" To conquer, stop and whip the ground, doesn't make much sense! Interestingly, in Aramaic and Arabic (two closely related languages to Hebrew), "kabash" means to "press, knead, plow, beat a path." Given that this is something we do with earth and not people, Genesis 1:28 isn't telling us to beat the dirt. 😊 It's very likely telling us to "**plow the earth and plant it.**"

Not so coincidentally, in the "second" Creation story in Genesis, Adam and Eve are put in the Garden to "abad" and "shamar," which mean "to serve or cultivate" and "to care, guard, and protect." In other words, like God, we are to prepare, sow, grow, and harvest. This "**God is a farmer**" imagery was used by Jesus quite a bit.

Notes on Other Creation Stories

The Hebrew Creation story stands in stark contrast to many other creation myths scholars have unearthed in the cultures and kingdoms that surrounded Israel throughout its history. Many of those myths involve battles, brokenness, and worlds and creatures created from the parts of gods or mythic animals. Interestingly, many creation stories share the imagery of water and darkness, but that is where the Hebrew Creation story diverges into its unique description—God takes charge of the chaos, he doesn't create more chaos. Scholars also believe that the Book of Genesis preserves two different Creation stories: Genesis 1:1 thru 2:3, and the Genesis 2 story of Adam and Eve.

For further reading: NPR's [interview with a Creation "myth" scholar](#). A description of the [Egyptian Creation myth](#). And a [comparison of the two Creations stories in Genesis](#) at Bible Odyssey.

Why We Chose the NIV for this Lesson Set

The words and images of Genesis 1 are famous. They are frequently quoted in church, literature, movies, and across the culture. The NIV's wording and phrasing of Genesis 1:1-2:3 are traditional, similar to most other English translations, and will very likely be similar to what students will hear in the world and from other translations they may read or hear.

This Background was written by the Rev. Neil MacQueen a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) where the dancing usually takes place only in our own minds.
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The Story of Creation

Video Workshop Lesson

Scripture for the Lesson

[Genesis 1:1 - 2:3](#) (NIV)

Key Verse: [Genesis 1:27](#) (NIV)

*"So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them."*

Lesson Objectives

- See the [Bible Background](#) at rotation.org for insights on this story and this set's complete list of objectives.

Show the video and have discussion with kids

The Story of Creation

"Caring for Creation" Bible Games Workshop

Summary of Activities

Students will play two games to help them learn and remember the story of Creation. They will also prepare a "Creation Care Card Pack"—a set of game cards to take home to encourage more appreciation and caring for Creation in their family.

Scripture for the Lesson

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 (NIV)

Key Verse: **Genesis 1:27** (NIV)

*"So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them."*

Lesson Objectives

See the [Bible Background](#) at Rotation.org for insights on this story and this set's complete list of objectives.

Preparation and Materials

- Read the Bible Background and scripture.
- Prepare to print and/or show the "[Shorter Version](#)" of the [Genesis scripture](#) and the "[Spot the Mistake](#)" [Student Edition game pages](#). See the [Endnotes](#) for ways you can share these documents with students.

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- Print one copy of the "[Spot the Mistake](#)" [Teacher's Edition document](#). It includes some teachable insights to share as your students "spot the mistakes."
- One marker for the teacher's use.
- Packets of wildflower seeds suitable for your region, one per student.

- Print a [Creation Care Card Pack](#) (one per student) for home use or special discussion. Cut and fold these cards per the instructions on the first card in a set. *See the "update" note below about one of the links in that pack.*
 - Collect coloring supplies.
 - For each student, a sheet of paper and tape to wrap the game cards and the seed packet for safe transport home.
-

Lesson Plan

Opening (2 minutes)

Welcome your students and explain what they will be doing and learning today. Tell them that today they will be playing several games about the Story of Creation, then they'll make their own caring for Creation card game to take home.

Scripture Activity: Spot the Mistake (15 min)

1. Read the Scripture

Display the "[Shorter Version](#)" of the Genesis scripture (or give it to students as a handout). Explain that—to save time—you are reading this version of Genesis that has been shortened from the story in the Bible. Let your students know that after they read it together, they'll be playing a game with a version of this text that has many mistakes in it for them to find!

Read the scripture. (We recommend you use the shortened version since that is the version that the "mistakes" version is based upon.)

2. Play the "Spot the Mistake" Game

First, remove from view the "correct" copy of the Genesis scripture. Then, show the "[Spot the Mistake](#)" [Student Edition](#) (either in the form of handouts to students or displayed in some manner as described in the [Endnotes](#)). Have your [Teacher's Edition](#) of the mistakes and teaching insights by your side.

1. Split into teams.
2. If projecting the text, **have a student from the first team come forward to "spot one mistake"** anywhere in the text by pointing at the mistake.
3. **If they are correct**, award their team a point. The teacher should highlight the discovered mistake on their Teacher Edition. If they are *incorrect*, you may give them a hint. Otherwise, their turn is over.
4. When they have correctly spotted a mistake, award them another point if they can **tell you the correct word that should be in the text**. If they get it wrong, let the other team guess. If both get it wrong, tell them the correct answer and move on.

5. Interject insights and questions between "spotting," using the information on your [Teacher's Edition of the text](#).
6. **End the game when you feel enough time has passed.** Share any significant mistakes (and their insights) that students missed spotting.

Adjust gameplay and hints as needed to be helpful and keep the game moving.

See the "adaptations" at the end of this lesson for playing this game with non-readers.

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Pictured above: Screenshots of the "Spot the Mistake" and Teacher Notes Handout

Game #2: Story of Creation Telephone Game (15 min)

This version of the "telephone game" uses key verses from the Genesis 1 story in the NIV translation. Substitute your preferred translation if needed. The first three are warm-ups and reminders of key verses. The last three are focused on the meaning of the "image of God."

Gameplay: Line up students so there are at least 4 people on a team. Put several feet between each student so they can't hear the message being whispered by others when it is not their turn to listen. The first person quietly hears the sentence/message from the leader. That person then walks to the next person in line and repeats the message word-for-word in a whisper. And so on... until the message reaches the last person who repeats it out loud for the whole group to hear. Correct as needed. Repeat for other phrases suggested below.

Some questions and comments are provided below. Adjust according to time and age group.

Telephone whisper	Questions/Comments to share
"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."	God loves to create! God wants us to be creative! How do you suppose this changes the way we view ourselves?
And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.	God <i>spoke</i> our world into being. What do you suppose this tells us about God?
And God saw that it was good.	How aware are you of the created world around you? What could help make you more aware? What part would you describe as "good?"
Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness."	I wonder who the "us" is in "Let us make mankind"? (Have older students look up John 1:1-5 .)
In the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them.	What does it mean that we are created in the "image" and "likeness" of God? Does God have arms and legs, a nose or hair? (The word "image" means something like "character" or "values.") What are some of God's values? We were created to love and take care just like God does!
God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.	Why are we supposed to take care of Creation? God calls Creation "good." That is why we take care of Creation—because God called it good! We honor God's good work when we take care of the land, water, air, animals, and each other.

Game #3 "Creation Care Card Pack" Card Game & Reflection (10-15 min)

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Distribute to each student a set of cut-apart cards in a "[Creation Card Pack](#)." Review the content of the cards with them as you wish, including how to play, then distribute coloring supplies to let the student illustrate the blank sides of each of the seven cards.



After they have finished illustrating the pack (in as little or as much time as you want to give them), have them wrap their deck of cards in a sheet of paper with the wildflower seed pack and tape the package closed so that they can safely transport the card pack and seeds home.

Close with a prayer of gratitude for Creation, and that the game cards and seeds will help our families think more about how we can care for God's Creation.

Adaptations

For Younger Students:

Spot the Mistake: Read the [Shorter Version of the Genesis text](#) to them slowly, telling them to listen carefully because you're going to be reading it again but putting "mistakes" into it to see if they can spot them! Read to them using the Teacher's Edition of "[Spot the Mistake](#)." When you come across a mistake, add a bit of emphasis on the mistaken word. If they don't catch the mistake right away, say "hold on a minute, what was that again? Is that right?" And repeat the mistaken word until they acknowledge it isn't the right word. Then ask them "what is the right word?" Simplify the teaching points as needed.

Telephone Game: Repeat the verse twice to the first person and have each person also repeat it twice to the person they are whispering it to. Shorten the verses as needed.

Creation Care Card Pack: Go over the cards in the pack and tell them how to play with their family when they get home. Caution them about opening the seed pack. Show them how tiny the seeds are so they aren't overly curious.

For Those With More Class Time:

Prior to reading the story add finding Genesis in the Bible.

Rather than using the shorter version of scripture, read the entire scripture from the Bible.

(Explain that the "Spot the Mistake" game uses a shortened version.)

Discuss Jesus' role in Creation. Explore [Colossians 1:15-18](#).

Add a game of Creation Story Charades using key phrases as the charade clue, like "Let there be light."

For a Shorter/Simpler lesson plan:

Skip the Telephone game. Spend a minimal amount of time illustrating the cards.

For At-Home Use:

Create more Creation Care Cards, including digging into the scripture verses.

Endnotes

Five Ways to Share the Scripture and Game #1 Handouts

1. Make paper copies (one per student) of both the "shorter" scripture passage and the "Spot the Mistake" game handouts.

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2. Print enlarged versions of these PDF
documents, using the print options: "Poster" and increase the "Tile Scale." Tape together the printed pages into a poster.
3. Plan to project these handouts on a large screen using an "old-fashioned" overhead projector (by printing the handouts on clear transparency sheets),
4. Save the handout files to your laptop and connect your laptop to a larger monitor or TV. (See the how-to [here](#).)
5. Print one copy of each handout file. Project these handouts on a large screen using a "modern" document camera.

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If you don't already own a modern overhead document camera projector, consider buying one for your program OR **make one using your cellphone**. [See these simple instructions at Rotation.org](#).

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Attachments

[Hide](#)

Files (4)

[Shorter-version-Genesis-scripture.pdf](#)

[Spot-the-Mistake-Genesis-1-Student-Edition.pdf](#)

[Spot-the-Mistake-Teacher-Edition.pdf](#)

[Creation Care Card Pack-Rev.pdf](#)

The Story of Creation

A Glo-Science Workshop Lesson

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Summary of Activities

Using a special hand lotion that glows when illuminated with a blacklight flashlight, students will explore the important meaning of the phrase "image of God" and how sharing God's goodness, creativity, and care (i.e., "image") is what we were created to do.

Scripture for the Lesson

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 (NIV)

Key Verse: [Genesis 1:27](#) (NIV)

*"So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them."*

Related Verse: [Ephesians 2:10](#) (NIV)

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Lesson Objectives

See the [Bible Background](#) at Rotation.org for insights on this story and the lesson set's learning objectives.

Materials and Preparation

- Read the Bible Background and scripture.
- [Glo Germ™ Gel Lotion](#) or [Glitter Bug Lotion](#). Temporarily cover the label of the bottle so as to disguise this product. This non-toxic product washes off with soap and water. Designed to demonstrate how "germs" spread and persist, we have repurposed its fun effect for this lesson! 😊
➡ [See more about this product in the endnotes of this lesson.](#)
- [Blacklight UV Flashlight](#) (They are inexpensive. Some lotion kits come with one but be sure it is strong enough. Refer to [the endnotes](#).)
- Make photocopies of the "[Shorter Version](#)" of the [Genesis scripture](#) (one per student). (Refer to [the endnotes](#) for more info about this shorter version.)
➡ If possible, copy onto colored paper as it makes the Glow Germ (which will be applied to these pages) stand out. It will not appear as vibrant on white paper.
➡ Do not use an inkjet printer to create copies—the Glo Germ will smudge the ink.
- Markers and a large sheet of paper (optional)
- A plate for every group of 4 to 6 students
- Ability to dim the lights in your room. The darker the room the greater the glow effect.
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or flipchart. Write on the board:
 - Q1. What does this story tell you about what God is like?
 - Q2. What else is God like?

Lesson Plan

Before class begins, in big letters using a modest amount of the Glo Germ lotion, write the word "GOD" on a prominent wall or door in the classroom and circle the word with the shape of a heart. ❤️ if you didn't use too much lotion then it will become nearly invisible to the unaided eye in about 30 minutes Test it with your blacklight. You will get back to this "God Heart" in demonstration #2 at the end of your lesson.

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Draw a large heart ❤️ on each of your scripture handouts using trace amounts of the lotion. Test with your blacklight and then let the handouts dry before stacking.

Opening

As students arrive in the classroom, give each of them a squirt of Glo Germ but tell them it is "hand sanitizer." 🤖 You want them to be surprised—surprises are great memory hooks. Assign some easy tasks to help them unknowingly spread the "glow" around your classroom:

- Arrange chairs, or...
- Move scripture handouts or Bibles to the table, or...
- Have a big sheet of paper on the table with some colored markers and invite them to quickly sketch an image of their favorite animal, bug, or place in God's world.

After a few minutes, explain that today they are going to be learning about the story of Creation and the special way in which God created us.

Ask them if they know where that story is found in the Bible, then **ask them to summarize** the story of Creation as much as they can. (If they mention the story of Adam and Eve, remind them that *that story* is found *after* the story of Creation in Genesis 2.)

Scripture Activity

1. Pass out the Scripture handouts, but before reading the scripture together, address the two questions written on the board.

Q1. What does this story tell you about what God is like? (Will we discover that God is mean or joyful? Boring or creative? Cares or doesn't care?)

Q2. What else is God like? (These can be characteristics learned from other lessons, such as "saving," and "comforting.")

2. Just before you start reading the passage together, **tell the class you have a secret you want to share with them.** Tell them that you didn't squirt hand sanitizer onto their hands; it was a special lotion. 🧴

3. Pull out your blacklight flashlight and shine it onto everyone's hands to show the glow. Shine the blacklight on a few other things students may have touched. (Assure students that this is a safe, non-toxic material.)

➡ *Hold the blacklight in such a way that students don't stare into it.* 🙄

4. Now turn the blacklight into a teaching metaphor by saying something like the following as you are shining the blacklight around the room...

The lotion I put on your hands is invisible until we see it with a blacklight. In the same way, the presence of God in our world and our universe is not always easy to see—until we shine *the light of faith on it*. Our faith helps us see God's fingerprints all over Creation. Our faith helps us to know that God has been at work creating this wonderful gift of Creation.

5. Now shine your blacklight on their scripture handouts (on which you have drawn Glo Germ lotion) and say:

In the same way, not everyone who reads or hears these words from Genesis will care about them. But when WE read and hear them—with the love of God in our hearts—God's word GLOWS with his presence and wisdom.

6. READ the Creation Scripture together.

7. Return to answer the two questions you wrote on the board:

Q1: What does the story say God is like?

Q2: What else do we know about what God is like?

Follow-up questions to ask:

--Does this story say that God cares only about BIG things?

(Obviously not, God cares about small things—things like bugs and fish. That means God cares about the things that *bug* us or make us happy. Nothing you do or say or that you are hurting about, is too small for God to notice and care about.)

--Does the story say we are the same as all the other animals or are we different?
(Different in that we are made in the "image of God.")

--How are we different than the rest of Creation?

(Let the children try to answer this before you go into explaining it in the next step.)

What does the phrase "image of God" mean? Let me show you!

Ask for two volunteers who are willing to let their foreheads touch each other for a moment. Draw a 1" solid heart on one student's forehead by dipping your finger in Glo Germ Gel. Call this person "God," and then have "God" touch their forehead to the other person to "share" their heart with them.

➡ Tip: Don't use too much lotion as when they touch foreheads the lotion may slip and "smoosh" the heart shape.

➡ You may choose to touch one arm to another person's arm.

Say: God gives every human being the ability to love and care for the world and for each other.

Shine the blacklight on God and the receiving person's foreheads, saying: Because we believe in God and that God has shared his image with each and every person—making *everyone* special—we treat each person with love and respect.

Ask and Do: Who else wants to try and share the "image of God" from their forehead (or arm) to another student? (Spend some time sharing the image of God. You can choose a heart or a cross. If a student is too shy to interact with another student in this manner, ask them to dab some Glo Germ from their hand to yours.)

Interacting again with the Scripture (optional)

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Place a glob of Glo Germ lotion on a plate(s) in front of students and invite them to "glo-mark" their scripture in response to the following:

1. Highlight with lotion the verses about the "image of God." Say to them that his part of the Creation story is the "heart" of the story because it tells us what God made us to do.

2. Highlight every occurrence of the word "good" in the passage. Ask what this word tells us about Creation. Are there *destructive* things in Creation? Sure, there are tornados and destructive people. But there's a promise built into Creation that God will never abandon us. That God will save us and that's very good! (You don't have to get too complicated here.)

3. Now, draw yourself into the passage, because you too are a part of God's story of Creation. God made you special and gave you the power to love and care.

Created to BE God's Image in the World ([Ephesians 2:10](#))

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Say: It isn't enough to just say you are created in God's image, **God wants you to LIVE like you are created in God's image!** That's the power God gives you when he gives you his image, his character, his Spirit. We are created to BE God's image in the world!

...So let's see what that might look like using some Glo Germ lotion and our blacklight...

Demonstration 1: The "Goodness" Pass

Say: I'm going to press a dab of our special lotion onto the back of one person's hand. They will then press that lotion into another's hand, who will press it into another, and so on. Let's see how many times we can "pass the glow" to another person before the lotion gets too faint to see. Keep it going around in a circle if necessary until the remains of the original lotion are almost too faint to see. Then point out that "the image of God" we share with the world through acts of goodness and kindness can go a long way! You never know how many people your act of goodness will affect. Imagine if everyone passed along God's goodness to everyone they met. What would the world be like then?

Demonstration 2: Gratitude for God's Goodness and Love

Say: One of the most important reasons for WHY we were created in God's image is so that we can love God back, in a way that bugs and trees cannot do. ***You were made by God to be able to return God's love.*** Imagine how sad it would be to love someone so much, but they never said "I love you" back? How terrible would that be? God feels the same way.

Shine your blacklight onto the Glo Germ heart circling the word "God" you drew on the classroom wall before class. Then, **invite each student to think of something in Creation they want to thank God for and write it next to your God-heart** using their finger and a dab of Glo Germ lotion.

Be ready to offer some suggestions about what to write. Shine the blacklight to help them spell it out. Then when everyone is done, shine the blacklight and read everyone's thanksgiving to God. Let them know this message will stay up here for a while (a few weeks or all year—as you like) as an "invisible" prayer of thanksgiving to God.

A Glowing Benediction

When it's time to go, line up your students at the door* and as each one leaves, PRESS a heart or cross from your hand to theirs, shine your blacklight on it, and offer this benediction: ***"Be the image of God's love and goodness to everyone you meet and every part of Creation."***

*If your students don't leave until a parent comes for them, apply the sign and benediction as they leave.

Adaptations

For Younger Students:

Some younger students may not want something "put on their hands" at first but will likely jump in once they see others doing it. Some may not want it put on their forehead so let them extend a hand or piece of paper.

Use a Bible storybook to tell the Creation story. Before class starts, draw a heart shape on the cover of this Bible. Eliminate the "glo-marking" of scripture activity but do discuss the "image of God" portions of scripture.

Count the number of times "good" appears in this story.

For Those With More Class Time:

Prior to reading the story add finding Genesis in the Bible.

Rather than using the shorter version of scripture, read the entire scripture from the Bible.

Using the Glo Germ, have students work together to write the first two parts of Genesis 1:27 on a wall or on a plastic surface using an art brush or their fingers. (They'll think they need more lotion, so use the blacklight to see where they are applying it.)

For a Shorter/Simpler lesson plan:

Eliminate having other students share the "image of God" from their forehead (or either arm) to another student.

Eliminate the "glo-marking" of the scripture.

Eliminate the "Goodness Pass."

For At-Home Use:

Because of the cost of materials, this may not be a good lesson for home use, though the reading of scripture and the discussion questions can be shared at home.

Endnotes

Important info about "Glo Germ" and "Blacklights"

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"Glo Germ" was designed to simulate "germs" and thus to teach the importance of proper handwashing. It is also useful to show how "germs" spread. Which is what we are repurposing it for! 🧐 Glo-Germ contains non-toxic tiny plastic particles that have been treated to glow under blacklight. The lotion is mostly mineral oil.

A little bit of Glo Germ lotion goes a long way when painting on skin or non-porous surfaces. You may need a bit more to brush onto a semi-gloss painted wall. Paper will absorb the lotion quickly. The lotion **EASILY WASHES OFF** hands, walls, and other surfaces and will not mar the surface when it dries.

The 8-ounce bottle of Glo-Germ is less than \$16 on Amazon. Two ounces is enough for up to eight students depending on how much illustrating and writing you do with the lotion in this lesson. (Again, a little bit goes a long way!)

Avoid "educational" supply websites that are overcharging for this product!

If you want to do some "painting" of hidden pictures and words, try the Glo-Germ "powder" and mix it with water. It will do better on porous surfaces, such as paper. Use your blacklight as you draw to avoid over-using the lotion or powder.

Take care not to get Glo-Germ in students' eyes. Flush eyes with water immediately and continue to flush until discomfort is eased. (Contact a physician if irritation persists.)

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Don't skimp on the size of the blacklight flashlight. Some distributors of Glo Germ sell very tiny lights which are okay for personal use, but you'll want a brighter blacklight for a more dramatic appearance and to light a broader area all at once (such as a wall that you've painted a message on). The style of light seen on the right is \$7 on Amazon.

Blacklights

Blacklights emit light in the UVA category. Limited exposure shouldn't cause any issues, but prolonged eye contact can cause retina damage. Keep your blacklight in the hands of a knowledgeable teacher.

About the "shorter" version of the Scripture passage:

Genesis 1:1-2:3 is a long passage of Hebrew poetry whose structure, grammar, and repetitions can be challenging for children to follow. As well, the NIV preserves some archaic words (like "vault") that are not essential to the meaning of the passage and require precious lesson time to explain. Thus, we've created a "streamlined" version, removing repetitive phrases and clarifying some language while preserving the beloved and essential wording and structure of the passage. See this [greyed-out version](#) to view the portions of scripture that we have removed and changed.

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The Story of Creation

Celebrating God's Creation & Creativity with a Painting Workshop Lesson

Summary of Activities

In addition to all the "things" God created, Genesis 1 also reveals the creative joy of God that calls the universe into being—light and color, stars, plants, and animals, and sheer goodness. To capture and experience this understanding of God's heart ❤️ students will be guided to create a Creation Story painting using the "wax resist" technique in the style of artist [Ted Harrison](#) who was known for his bold, simple, and joyful landscapes reflecting the beauty of the Creation he saw around him.

To begin feeling the creative and loving inspiration that brought the world and us into being, students will watch a brief video-reading of portions of ***When God Made the World***, the inspirational children's book about the story of Creation by Matthew Paul Turner. In this video, the text is shown onscreen as we see children playing in some of the places described in the story.



This lesson includes a PowerPoint (and a PDF) you can show to your students, displaying samples of Harrison's art and explaining the process they will use to create their artwork.

What a time-saver for your teachers who do not have to search for art samples and then print them in color! 🙌

Scripture for the Lesson

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 (NIV)

Key Verse: [Genesis 1:27](#) (NIV)

*"So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them."*

Lesson Objectives

See the [Bible Background](#) at Rotation.org for insights on this story and this set's complete list of objectives.

This art lesson includes a focus on the creative joy and artistry of God in Genesis 1, and the fact that we are made in that same joyfully creative image.

Preparation and Materials

- Read the Bible Background and scripture.
 - Preview the video of the book reading on YouTube: [When God Made the World](#) (2 minutes).
 - Preview and prepare to show the "Creation Art in the Harrison style" presentation available as a downloadable [PowerPoint file](#) and as [a PDF](#). Both versions have teaching comments included that explain the art project and prime students to create. You can show them on a screen or print either version as a handout.
 - Gather...
 - [Oil Pastels](#) and [White Oil Pastels](#) (Not your typical crayons! Oil pastel crayons create a better line and "resist" the watercolor paints better)
 - Watercolor paint and brushes (notice Harrison's bold and complementary colors!)
 - White, heavy art paper (135 lb works best), one sheet per student (and plenty to spare)
 - Small bowls of water (to wash brushes frequently)
 - Scrap paper (optional, for trying out the process)
 - An easel or whiteboard; appropriate marker
 - Play with the art materials ahead of time, to become familiar with the wax resist technique.
 - Practice pronouncing the Hebrew words "tov" (sounds like cove) and "[meh-ode](#)" to say, "meh-ode tov."
-

Lesson Plan

Opening (8 minutes)

Welcome students and say "It is *so tov* to see you today!"

Ask, what do you suppose "tov" might mean?

Maybe you had a clue from the way I said this word, even though you probably had not heard it before. "Tov" means good in Hebrew, and "meh-ode tov" means VERY good. "Tov" can also mean beautiful.

Ask students to think of something in God's Creation that is "meh-ode tov"—VERY good. Ask a few students to "pop up" and say their "something" along with the words tov or meh-ode-tov. (Example: waves at the beach are TOV!) Encourage enthusiasm.

Explain: The Bible tells us that God used these very words to describe his Creation. Creation is "tov," good. It is beautiful.

Continuing to concentrate on joy, delight, and love and care...

Ask: How do you suppose God felt when he was creating the world?"

I wonder what God expected? (*This is a lead into the direction they will hear in the video.*)

Video Inspiration! When God Made the World (10 minutes)

Say: Our Bible story is about how God was the first and greatest artist of all time. The Creation story shows God's delight in Creation! Joy is at the beginning of everything. God made people to share in his joy and his love, and to be like him in their ability to express joy and be loving. [2] Even the word "hovering"—used in the Bible to describe what God was doing at the first moment of creation—can be understood to mean "shaking with anticipation," even dancing! [3] As God created, God was joyful!

Say: God's Creation has inspired millions of artists to paint skies and fields and flowers. His stars have inspired billions of people to look up with awe at the majesty of his work.

Say: Today, we will hear a version of the Story of Creation by watching and listening to a video presentation of the book *When God Made the World*. Then after we watch and talk about the video, we will create joyful paintings of God's Creation.

Say: As we watch this short video, listen for what the author suggests we remember about God's Creation.

NOTE to teachers: *When God Made the World* is a children's book by Matthew Paul Turner. It tells the Creation Story in rhythmic, whimsical text in a similar style to the Genesis scripture. This video was created with some of the same text from the book but instead of using the illustrations from the book, video clips of joyful children are used to illustrate the words about God's Creation.

Video Link: *When God Made the World* (2 minutes long)

<https://youtu.be/Fs96eHxYAt0>

Questions to ask after the video:

- What did you see in this video that was "tov" (good)?
- What do you suppose was the emotion that the children in this video were feeling? (Point out that though all the children in the video were different, they all looked and acted joyfully. That's how God wants us to respond to him and his Creation—with joy.)
- What did the video say to remember?
(Replay the answer which is at the 1:12 minute mark in the video: **"God had a purpose for making you."**)
- What did the video say that God wants us to do with our "every gift or talent or shtick?" [4]
- Shtick is a word that means "what you are interested in." This is saying, "Use whatever you've got—what God created in you—to make the world a better place!" One way we can **make the world a better place** is by sharing our joy, just like God shared his joy at

Creation. We share our joy when we are inspired by wonderful things like bugs and mountains, stars and oceans, and creating art!

Expressing our Creative Joy Just As God Did in Creation

To Prepare Your Students (10 minutes)

1. **Show the PowerPoint or PDF version "Creation Art in the Harrison Style."** Note: When you show the PowerPoint in [Presenter View](#), you can see the talking points for each slide. The talking points are included in the PDF as well.
2. **Let them practice the "wax resist" method** on scrap paper by drawing a quick image of Creation they might include in their finished work using the oil pastels. Have them paint within their lines (as they are able) with watercolor to see how their drawing will look.
3. Then give everyone a fresh sheet of art-quality paper to begin their creation.

To Begin Drawing and Painting their creation about Creation...

1. **Remind students** that they are to draw a favorite part or scene in God's Creation in the Harrison style, beginning with bold curvy lines, and finishing with bright joyful colors. Remind them that the place or scene and the curves they draw it with should express both God's joy and theirs for that place.
2. **Have them draw their creation scene** and its objects and symbols using oil pastel lines in the Harrison style—curvy lines!

★ **TIP:** Avoid drawing too much detail.

★ **TIP:** Press the oil pastels so that the lines are strong and thick. This will help separate the watercolors.

★ **TIP:** If they need to start over, let them. Even in Creation things get a fresh start.

3. **When they are done drawing their Harrison lines, have them begin to fill in the blank spaces with watercolors.**

★ **TIP:** Harrison would have kept each color within the lines, so as not to blend his colors. Try that!

★ **TIP:** Harrison did not use "primary" colors, but shades of them.

★ **TIP:** Start with the LIGHTER colors first. Don't soak your paper. The smallest amount of water will provide the most color. Remember to use complementary colors.

★ **TIP:** It's okay to leave some of the paper unpainted.

Putting something in your painting that represents YOU.

In addition to drawing a favorite place in God's Creation, you will also want to include

some sort of representation of YOU and your feelings about God's Creation in your landscape. This could be a simple outline of you, or your favorite pet or animal. How could your sun or sunlight suggest a heart or an embrace? Could your hills and mountains leap up and touch the sky? Are your water or waves calm or swirling with energy? Are you reaching up to the heavens? or holding someone's hand? You will want to keep these expressions simple and use your curves and colors to express beauty, thanks, and awe.

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Reflection and Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Circle around everyone's completed artwork and invite each artist to share and explain their creation. Point out some of the beautiful features and expressions before you.

Offer a prayer that gives thanks for Creation, but most importantly, for God's loving joy that surrounds us every day. Lord, make us more like you every day—joyful, loving, and creative just like you! Amen.

Adaptations

For Younger Students:

Your youngest students may need more help and examples drawn for them on the board. One way to show this technique might be to put your hand over theirs to guide their oil pastel on a piece of scrap paper. (Part of the joy of Creation is that we get to share it!) To keep things simple, pick one oil pastel color (or white) and stick with that. (Remind them that color will be added with the watercolor paints.)

For Older Students:

Challenge students to express in advance what they hope to draw, then offer suggestions. Have them dig into the concept of "adding God" to their painting. Artists often represent God in art using light, motion, glowing objects, bright clouds, or a certain color. Use [tube watercolor paints](#) for a more saturated color. ([Palettes](#) with compartmentalized paint wells will be needed for diluting paint and mixing colors.)

For Those With More Class Time:

Before watching the video, add finding Genesis in the Bible. Include reading the scripture from the Bible.

Spend more time planning their art creation. Discuss what they would choose to represent Creation. It could be your favorite canyon or ocean or both! They could add birds, animals, wonderful trees, streaming warm sunlight, outer space. (God certainly painted a lot of space!) Think of what you like to look at in God's Creation or where you like to be, or what you are grateful to God for creating in your world; what brings you joy?

Allow students to make a second painting.

As you gather around the completed works of art, ask students to describe a portion of their creation and what it means to them.

For a Shorter/Simpler lesson plan:

Omit the students sharing what they think is "meh-ode tov."

Have students pick one oil pastel color (or white) and stick with that. (Remind them that color will be added with the paints.)

For At-Home Use:

Families may take time to explore creation on a walk or by reviewing some of their experiences in Creation. Include their discoveries in their art design.

About the Harrison "style"

More details and thoughts for the students are found in the attached presentation.

Ted Harrison's style features bold contrasting colors in a simple, almost child-like style. He used large patches of warm colors beside patches of cool colors to create contrast.

He almost never used straight lines. He kept his colors separate with curved (wax) lines. **He drew landscapes and light with color and curves that made them come alive with a sense of wonder and majesty.**

He would often include small details, such as animals or people or objects in the landscape, but these were dwarfed by the majesty of their surroundings. His people and animals often expressed an emotion, such as joy or embrace.

In the Harrison illustration seen above left, the sun almost looks like a heart, the sky seems to be sending a message of love, and the person in the foreground seems to be on a journey. Harrison skies always seem to come alive --and not simply be a blue field with white clouds as children will paint without direction. Encourage them to use curves and shapes and colors that send a bold message about Creation --as bold a message as God' Creation does to us!

Harrison used a complicated wax silk-screen process to create his works. Students across the world today use a simpler "wax resist" technique.

[Here is an excellent walk-through with photos](#) of how kids can create in the Harrison style.

Endnotes:

[1] If your classroom doesn't have wired or Wi-Fi Internet access, you can use your cellphone's Internet connection to access YouTube ([learn how here](#)). Connect your cellphone or your computer to a TV screen using a simple inexpensive cable ([learn how to do that here](#)).

[2] From Sally Lloyd Jones, *The Jesus Story Book Bible*.

[3] See the [Bible Background](#) for more on the meaning of the Hebrew word used to describe the movement of God's Spirit over the waters of Creation.

[4] In the book by Matthew Paul Turner, it is spelled "shtick." The video spells it "schtick." Either way of spelling is considered okay.

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The Writing Team Fortifying our Supporting Members

Who is Ted Harrison?

What is his style?

[Artist Ted Harrison](#) is known for his colorful depictions of Yukon landscapes and life—where he spent two decades—and the Pacific Northwest where he spent the last two decades of his life. Born the son of an English coal miner, he immigrated to Canada after WWII, becoming a painter,

writer, and school teacher. His works are found in many museums, public spaces, and private collections. He has also illustrated several children's books.

His style is known for its bold colors, flowing lines, and joyful simplicity.



Throughout his career, Harrison taught art to young people in schools and studios. He would tell children to *"use your imagination, there's life in your imagination. Don't worry about what other people are saying."* He was once told by an art curator that they didn't want any of his paintings in their gallery *"because they were so simple even children could understand them."*

In 1987 he was awarded The Order of Canada. In 2004, he was made a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and presented with the Order of British Columbia in 2008.

He passed away in 2015 at the age of 88.

One of the techniques that Harrison is known for is **the use of lines to separate bold colors**. Unlike most watercolor or impressionist style paintings which blend colors where they meet, Harrison's art separated color by lines. He applied his colors using a complex silk-screening technique—which children's teachers around the world have **imitated by using the simpler "wax resist" technique**.

Students first draw lines or images with a colored or white crayon and then apply watercolors over the crayon. The paint will not stick to the wax in the crayon. This "wax resist" technique is child-like in its result and very similar in appearance to Harrison's more labor-intensive method.

You can find many websites discussing the technique and its variations. (Wax is still sometimes used in "silk screening" to keep colors separate.)

Harrison carefully chose his vibrant colors so that they complemented each other. Often he alternated between warm and cool colors, shades found in nature painted with undulations that capture the energy and imagination of both the artist and the landscape.

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