

all age main course

getting creative with creation

AN ALL AGE BIBLE EXPLORATION SESSION

AIMS

- To explore the topic of Creation in a multisensory, bible related way;
- To make links between our own experiences of being part of God's creation and the way we remember the bible;
- To allow these connections to transform our shared understandings and actions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this creative bible exploration session participants will have

- had some creative multisensory fun around the theme of creation
- made some links between creation in the here and now and their remembered bibles
- decide on some shared creation centred creative action as a result

RESOURCES

You will need:

- some sheets of paper (from a flip chart or similar) and pens
- plenty of space, small tables, etc to work on
- 'things' that represent or illustrate creation, provided by participants
- sticky notes

PREPARATION

In advance, ask people to bring in things that speak to them about the theme of 'Creation': photos, objects, poems, stuff from websites, are perhaps the easiest things for people to share but almost anything goes at this stage (remember that if someone brings in an exotic pet you may need to house it appropriately to ensure it doesn't escape during the session). It may be necessary to unpack the term 'Creation' a bit: what does it mean to you? A question or few sentences of explanation should suffice. Try to encourage people's own definitions rather than impose a limited viewpoint. Some of the things people contribute might 'speak for themselves'. Others might require a title or come with a personal story attached. It's better if people select something specific to bring rather than bring 20 volumes of a wildlife encyclopaedia for example.

BEGINNING THE SESSION

[10 mins]

Begin the session with refreshments (nice ones) and a chance for participants to mingle and peruse the stuff. Collect all the stuff or lay it out in a place where people can begin to immerse themselves in it. Remind the group that the stuff belongs to others and should be treated respectfully (add any other ground rules that the group thinks appropriate). Spend about 10 minutes looking at the stuff, eating and drinking and chatting.

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RESPONDING TO THE STUFF

[5 mins]

Give people sticky notes they can draw or write on and invite them to take them round the room and stick them near things that spoke particularly to them. A note might have a smiley, sad or surprised face on it, it might have a word like 'wow!' or 'great' or a phrase like 'not many left now' or any response people feel able to share.

REMEMBERING THE BIBLE

[15 mins]

Call people back together and remind them that there are stories in the bible about Creation. What do they remember about these stories? If necessary give a few more clues – at the beginning of the bible (this is probably the easiest place to start but of course someone may remember another reference to Creation from another part of the bible like a Psalm or the story of Job for example – do not dismiss this but store it up for later consideration). Get people to talk in small informal groups about what they remember about the stories of Creation from the beginning of the bible. This is a remembered bible activity so ensure the participants don't refer to written bibles: it rather spoils the whole thing if some do.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT GROUPS

You may want to leave the groups to assemble on their own or you may think it better to engineer more formal groups. This will depend on what you know about the group as a whole and how it usually works together. Sometimes a group can be dominated by one or two loud people who struggle to let others have their say. Sometimes it can be dominated by apathy and a failure to engage which comes from a few people but swamps the interest of others. Sometimes an all age, all ability group will readily facilitate the contribution of those who struggle with words or have difficulty with attention, memory or some other faculty, but in other groups these people will be left passively on the edge as no one is quite sure what to do. If you know your group in advance you may be able to suggest who works with whom and how. On the other hand it may be enough to remind the whole group to work together in a collaborative rather than competitive way and see what happens. Remembering the bible is collaborative not competitive, a group sharing not a test.

THE NEXT STEP

[5-10 mins]

Hopefully some will have remembered that the first account of Creation in the bible is a story of God creating the world in 7 days. The next thing to do is to try to get people to reassemble the stuff according to the 7 days of creation. How you do this will depend on the size of the group, the space available and the amount of stuff. Perhaps seven tables to put stuff on and seven groups of people, one for each day and each table. Or people might want to get the stuff they brought and put in on the day they think appropriate. Getting people to 'own a day' is important at this point, as we will want to hear from them about that day in due course. Once the stuff has been rearranged and people have had a chance to confirm that arrangement, ask them to go into small groups around a day. If the group is very small this may only be one or two people per day or even more than one day per person but that is fine. Whatever the arrangement will just influence how people reflect on their day/days in the next section. There are two days, 1 and 7 which might have accumulated less stuff than the other five days (this will depend on what people brought and how it has been arranged). Don't assume this will make it more difficult.

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CONSTRUCTING A REMEMBERED VERSION

[15 mins]

Give each of the seven groups a large sheet of paper (like from a flip chart) and a few pens. Invite the groups to tell the story of this day, referring to the stuff that has been collected and anything else they now want to add. This story can be in written words, a cartoon or even origami (!).

SHARING THE REMEMBERED VERSIONS

[15 mins]

Call the groups together and ask each group to tell the story of their day as they have recorded it. Ask the others to listen carefully. See how each group ends their day. If necessary prompt an ending along the lines of: 'and there was morning and evening, the nth day'. After all the remembered versions have been shared ask participants what they heard, what surprised them, what they would add. This is not a time to tare into any one person or group's version. Rather it is an opportunity to add other insights and interpretations. Where participants disagreed about versions, make sure they understand that everyone has their own RB. Refer to the role of oral versions and memory in the construction of the whole bible if appropriate. Most particularly ask participants, what did you learn about Creation? Make a list, on another flip chart page, of the things people learnt, want to know more about, etc. If there are participants who have remembered other bits of the bible concerned with Creation, then this may be a good place to bring those in.

WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?

[as long as you like]

The group needs to decide what their response will be to this exploration. Maybe the whole group will choose a response together, the different day groups will make their own responses or subgroups with particular interests might form to make other responses. This will depend on the size of the whole group and what they're all interested in. It will also depend on when and where you do this activity. If part of a church weekend then you may have longer than if a half day or after school/work activity. Some examples could include:

A prayer for a day

Each day group to write a short prayer around the theme of their day. The seven days of creation prayers could then be illustrated and displayed in the worship space, put in the church magazine, or on the website. If prayers are written try to use them in a closing session;

Write a Haiku

A variation on this idea is to write a haiku for each day. A haiku is a Japanese poem of 17 syllables, but you can borrow the idea and write them in any language. Usually the pattern is 3 lines, the first and last with 5 syllables, and the middle line with seven syllables. It reasonably easy to get the hang of although experience suggests that chocolate finger biscuits may help with counting the syllables as few people have 17 fingers each. In which case provide a few packets of these to help out (and replenish any flagging energy). Here's an example for day one which uses a 5, 5, 7 pattern which is quite acceptable.

Creation Haiku

God's spirit breathes life.
Plants, animals, all flourish:
then time to enjoy and rest.

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An active response

A response may arise from one of the days in particular, like getting involved in a campaigning group particularly centred around one issue: water, air, animals and plant life, climate change, use of resources, time for rest, etc. The group might like to look something up on the internet, make a poster explaining the issue to others, hold an event to raise funds, etc.

Getting away from it all

The group might want to arrange an outing or holiday to follow up on the creation theme by visiting a place where they could learn more about particular things: a museum of natural history, sea or wild life park, nuclear power plant, etc. It's always a good idea to ask participants to suggest what they want to do next. It might be another one of the V4L bible studies, or it could be something else.

EVALUATION

[5-10 mins]

Don't forget to find out how people got on with the activity. Have sheet for each participant on which they can write or draw their response.

Ask them

- What did you like best?
- What did you not like?
- What would you like to do next?

NEXT STEP

There are more All-age Bible activities on the menu, including some starters and deserts. Why not have a look at one for your next session?