



# STORIES **AND** RITUALS

## LESSON 1

### Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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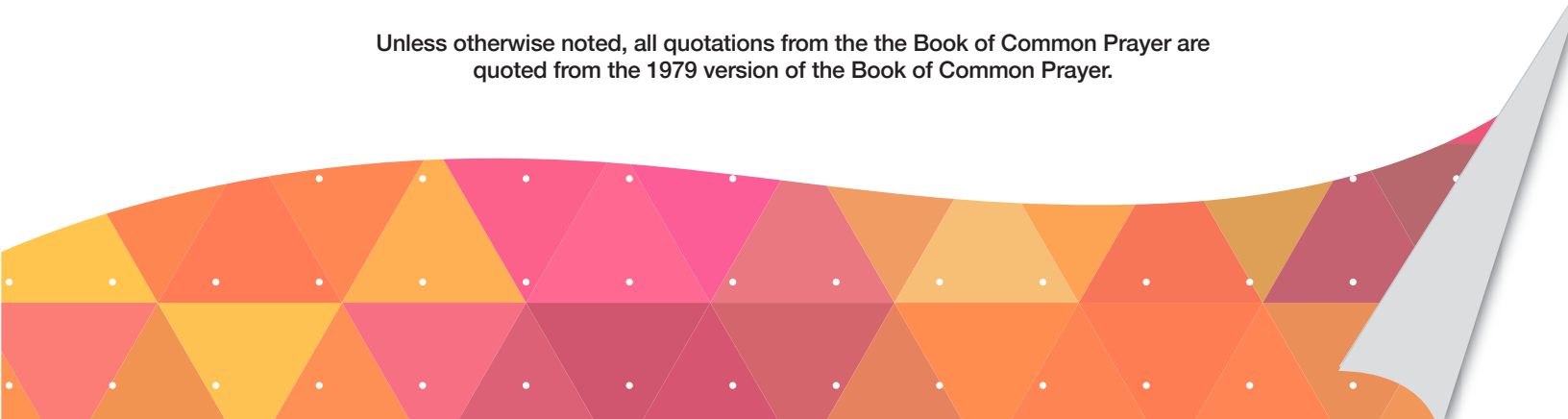
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# God Creates – Humanity Sins

**Texts: Genesis 1-3**

**Big Idea: Creation is ordered for relationship**

## Lesson Objectives

### Participants will:

1. Identify the importance of language in relationships by sharing positive adjectives with others.
2. Recognize God's language of life and mercy in Genesis by engaging in a re-telling of the story.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of using positive language by creating an individual art project.

### ACTIVITY (TIME)

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Dive In (10 minutes)  
**Group Check-In**

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Community Builder (15 minutes)  
**People Bingo**

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The Story (15 minutes)  
**God Creates-Humanity Sins**

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The Ritual (15 minutes)  
**Words**

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Dig Deeper (10 minutes)  
**Code Switching**

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Wrap it Up (5 minutes)  
**Closing Prayer**

### MATERIALS NEEDED

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- Nothing

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- Copy of Lesson Sheet 1.1
  - Pens or pencils
  - Stopwatch or clock

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- Copy of Lesson Sheet 1.2

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- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
  - Method for playing music (optional)
  - Construction Paper or Cardstock
  - Scissors
  - Magazines or Newspapers
  - Glue

- 
- Construction Paper or Cardstock
  - Scissors
  - Magazines or Newspapers
  - Glue

- 
- Nothing

# LESSON OVERVIEW



## What's the Story?

Today your group will explore the story of creation and the “fall” found in the book of Genesis. This story offers some key insights into God, humanity and the world using symbolic language and poetic repetition and form.

The opening chapters of Genesis move from the specific details of the sequence of creation to more broad ideas about humanity's relationship with God. Through all of this, we see that the action of language moves the story along. God's speaking causes creation to be and gives humanity the major role in creation of naming the animals. In Genesis 2:23, we see deep relationships in humanity form through spoken word.

Just as words build up and create good, we find that in 3:1 the serpent uses words to lure the woman into eating the forbidden fruit. It is through listening to the serpent's words that humanity begins to experience separation and judgment, and it is humanity that speaks the first words of judgment in story and not God (3:12).

Then, God begins to speak to humanity using not only a language of judgment, but also words of mercy which lead the way back to the humanity speaking words that will once more build up good relationships.



## What's the “Big Idea?”

Today's lesson focuses on the big idea that *Creation is ordered for relationship*. Each of us has a variety of relationships in our lives, all of different qualities. However, all relationships are rooted in creation itself and in the power of language. In today's lesson your group will explore how relationships can be built up or diminished through language.



## What's the Symbol?

Creation is all around us and speaks to the interconnectedness that exists between all living and non-living things. All life relies upon sun, soil, and water in some way. Living things also rely upon other living things to thrive. Creating a small garden of rocks, water, and various plants will serve as a reminder of the interconnected that exists in creation.



## What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will invite participants to think about how words can be used to build up and foster relationships. They will explore how the words they use to describe others, God, and even themselves matter. Your group will also explore how words can have the opposite impact.



## Setting Up Your Space

Set up your “altar” area. Cover a large table with a piece of fabric or linen. On the altar place a large bowl of water and then surround it with a collection of rocks, sticks, plants of various sizes and other natural matter. Place at least one candle near the water. Have scissors, paper, magazines or newspapers, and glue ready nearby for the ritual.

## DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

### Group Check-In

#### Materials:

- Nothing

#### During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:  
**Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**
- **Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not-so-great things that have happened to us this week. What were the high points and low points of your week?** Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

## COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

### People Bingo

#### Materials:

- Copies of Lesson Sheet 1.1
- Pencils or Pens
- Stopwatch or clock

#### Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 1.1 for each person.

#### During the session:

- **Today we're going to talk about how the words we use help us connect with people. An important part of being in connection with people is using language that represents a person. What are the words that you would use to describe yourself? Let's find out.**
- Give each person a copy of Lesson Sheet 1.1 and a pencil or pen.
- **We are going to use each other to play a game of bingo. On your bingo sheet you will find a list of words that people often use to describe themselves. Everyone will try to complete their bingo card by finding different people in our group who would use these words to describe themselves. You will have 7 minutes to fill out as much of the card as you can. You can only return to the same person after you have asked all the other people in the group.**
- Set a timer for 7 minutes and begin having the group ask each other how they might describe themselves. At the end of 7 minutes, bring the group back together.
- For a twist or with small groups, have participants identify individuals from their lives that they would describe using these various words, but they may only use the same person once.

## COMMUNITY BUILDER - CONTINUED

- Where these words that you would actually use to describe yourself? What words were missing? *[Answers will vary.]*
- How important is it to find the right word to describe someone? Why? *[Answers will vary.]*



## THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

# God Creates-Humanity Sins

### Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 1.2

### Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 1.2
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

### During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 1.2.
- After the story, ask: **What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: God began creating through speaking; God desires to speak and have a relationship with creation; God invites creation into relationships.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: Humanity shares in the creative act of speaking; our language can build up relationships; we sometimes use language that hurts more than strengthens relationships; we need to take time to think about our relationships and turn back to the words of love God gave us.]*
- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: The world was created as God spoke; it echoes God's words of love and relationship; the world is a place where many different types of words are used and they all impact it in some way.]*
- **Creation was not some afterthought, but is the direct effect of God speaking and revealing God's self. God created humanity with the potential to share in speaking God's word into the world, but humanity has sometimes chosen other words. These words often hurt more than help. But, God continues to speak God's words of mercy and grace and invites humanity every day to share in speaking them, too.**



# THE RITUAL

## (15 MINUTES)

## Words

### Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Scissors
- Magazines or newspapers
- Glue

### Before the session:

- Set up your space so that the materials can be easily accessed by the group.
- You may wish to set up a tables and chairs for individuals to sit at as they work and pray.

### During the session:

- If you have not done so, light the candle on your altar area. If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **In today's story, we discovered something very important about creation: Creation is ordered for relationship. We also heard how language played a large role in creating and nurturing creation. Language also disrupted the relationships within creation and God used language to begin to repair these relationships.**
- **Think about your own language and the words you use. What are some of your favorite words to describe someone? What are some of your favorite phrases or greetings?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- **I am going to invite each of us to take a few moments think about our words and then create a collage from words we find in these magazines and newspapers. The collage can be a collection of words in various locations on the page or it can become a phrase, a poem, or a prayer. The words we use for these collages should be words that build up and nurture the relationships in creation.**
- Give the group time to look through the magazines and newspapers and create their collage.
- **In a moment we are going to each place our collage of words on our altar since it represents a bit of God's creation. As we place them in this small creation, I invite you to offer a prayer for the relationships that you hold dear in your life.**
- Invite the group to offer their words and prayer. Some groups may be more reserved during this time, but others may giggle. This is okay, as God is in our laughter as well.
- **Our words are one way in which we work with God in God's work of creation and relationship-building. How can we live or experience this more fully in our daily lives?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: respecting others, taking time to be present, active listening, affirming others.]*

# DIG DEEPER

## (10 MINUTES)

### Code Switching

#### Materials:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue
- Scissors
- Magazines or newspapers

#### During the session:

- We each use words to build and develop our relationships, but we also each use words from time to time that hurt or end relationships. We may judge or stereotype and individual, or we tell ourselves in some way that we do not like or want to be friends with that person.
- **How do we use words that keep from forming relationships with others?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: We call them names; we tell ourselves they are not cool; we judge their clothes; we don't forgive them for something.]*
- **How can we switch our language, code switching it is sometimes called, about these people, who we might find difficult to be in relationship with?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: Look for positive traits about the person; get to know them; ask them a question.]*
- **Think about the words that you use most often that hurt relationships. Use these words to create another collage using words from the magazines and newspapers.**
- Give individuals the chance to create their collages.
- **We are going to bring our collages to our altar again. This time, fold it up and offer it with a prayer asking for help to recognize when you are using these words and help to switch them to positive words.**
- Invite participants to bring their collages forward.

# WRAP IT UP

## (5 MINUTES)

### Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week. Close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

**Creating God, we made your creation as a place where relationships could be fostered and thrive. You invited all of humanity to assist with nurturing these relationships and gave us words of love, mercy and grace to do so. Help us when we use instead, words of judgment or selfishness, to return again to your words. Amen.**

# Lesson Sheet 1.2

## God Creates; Humanity Sins

### (Genesis 15)

A story about Creation from Genesis:

In the beginning when the worlds were void, God began to speak. The winds of God's breathe began to flutter across the waters and God said: "Let there be light." And there was an explosion of light and it was good. God spoke again and the earth began to take form; the atmosphere began to change and develop and the Sky took shape. And it was good. Likewise the light was taking shape as God spoke and there was a greater light for day and a lesser light for night.

Once more God's voice rang out and the Sea and the dry Earth took shape. God persisted in speaking and as the Earth and Sea took form plants and all types of vegetation began to grow. And it was good. Then as God spoke the waters began to stir and out of the depths came all manner of living things. The waters teamed with life, and the air too began to be filled with all manner of birds. And it too was good.

God's voice continued to move in the world and the dry land began to team with living things as well. Reptiles, amphibians and the mammals began to roam the Earth. And it was good.

Then God spoke a special word; a word that became planted in the depths of his next creation. God's Word moved and humanity came to be, male and female in God's image created to share in speaking God's word. And it was good. Then God rested.

God's Word had been planted in the very being of humanity and God warned them to guard it carefully and to share speaking it. God warned them that there were other words that could be deadly to them should they take them in and begin to speak them instead. The Word God had given to them was for the building and nurturing of relationships, while these other words hurt and divided humanity from each other, creation and even God.

Humanity began to speak as well and share in God's creation, as humanity named all the plants and creatures of the land, sea and sky. They began to see that these names, these words built relationships and understanding. This was true of the relationship between each other as humanity found in each other companionship and love.

But the words of which God had warned humanity about soon made found their way to their ears. And it was not long until humanity took these words into their hearts and relationships began to suffer. They began to hide from God and hide themselves from each other. They began to judge and put themselves first before others. They had chosen not to speak God's Word but the words of which they had been warned.

God spoke to humanity and used the words which they now understood all too well; words of judgment, because humanity had already forgotten the Word of God. But God began from that time forward to speak words of mercy and grace to help the people remember God's Word and to prepare for the time when God's Word would once more be revealed in humanities heart.



# Lesson Sheet 11

## BINGO CARD

# B

# I

# N

# G

# O

HOPEFUL

GRACEFUL

INDEPENDENT

OPTIMISTIC

PEACEFUL

LOYAL

CREATIVE

EMPATHETIC

DEVOTED

FUNNY

UNAFRAID

CARING

AFFIRMING

CALM

UNDER-  
STANDING

RESPONSIBLE

GENUINE

LOVING

HUMBLE

OUTGOING

FORGIVING

INNOVATIVE

HONEST

JOYFUL

INTELLIGENT