

Living for Life

May's Theme: Creation

Introduction

Science and religion are two different subjects. Science teaches us about creation through math and the sciences. Religion teaches us about creation through our relationship with God. Christianity draws its understanding of creation from scripture, specifically Judaism.

Since the beginning of time, humankind has sought to understand the origins of the world. Science believes the universe began with a small ball of matter that exploded and has continued to expand. Judaism and Christianity believe that God created the universe.

When we think of Creation spiritually, we take these Biblical stories about creation as "stories of origin." In other words, who are we, who are we to God, and how should we treat this world?

Package Contents

Wondering Cards:

This package has six wondering cards. Use them for conversation starters when the family is together, such as over a meal, after watching television show if a card seems applicable to the story or riding in the car together as a way to pass the miles. Use them throughout the month. They can be used once or multiple times.

Scriptures:

(enter the color) This package contains four scriptures all having to do with creation. Discuss at least two of the scriptures during the month. Find the scripture in the Bible and then discuss one or two of the questions on the reference sheet. You can rephrase the question if it will help them to answer the question. Also, you can revisit the scripture at another time during the month if you want to ask the other questions. Bear in mind that the answers are not clear cut, black and white. You can answer them too.

Included are the two creation stories from Genesis and two psalms, each address some aspect of creation.

Prayers:

(enter the color) This packet contains several prayers. These prayers may help to re-enforce our responsibility to be stewards of creation.

Activity Sheet:

(enter the color) The activity ties together this month's theme.

Resources:

(white) Picture of the universe (cosmology) from ancient Israel

See the obverse side for Bible information.

Basic Bible User's Instructions

The Bible contains writings which are thousands of years old. It is a sacred book containing wisdom, although written long ago, it remains fresh as scriptures still can teach us how to live today. Some people call the Bible an operating manual for life.

The Bible contains "books." Each book has one or more chapters, and each chapter has verses.

When we reference a scripture, we cite the book, the chapter, and the verse or verses. Thus, if we see a reference to Luke's account of Jesus' birth, the citation would be Luke 2:8-20. It means:

- The Gospel According to Luke
- Chapter two
- Verses 8-20

Note that a colon separates the chapter and the verse(s).

Furthermore, the Bible we use as Protestants has two major sections: Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament has the same books as in the Jewish Bible (although in a different order). The section often called the New Testament is scriptures used by Christians to understand Jesus and our faith.

Books of the Bible

Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures		New Testament	
Genesis	Ecclesiastes	Matthew	Titus
Exodus	Song of Solomon	Mark	Philemon
Leviticus	Isaiah	Luke	Hebrews
Numbers	Jeremiah	John	James
Deuteronomy	Lamentations	Acts of the Apostles	1 Peter
Joshua	Ezekiel	Romans	2 Peter
Judges	Daniel	1 Corinthians	1 John
Ruth	Hosea	2 Corinthians	2 John
1 Samuel	Amos	Galatians	3 John
2 Samuel	Obadiah	Ephesians	Jude
1 Kings	Jonah	Philippians	Revelation
2 Kings	Micah	Colossians	
1 Chronicles	Nahum	1 Thessalonians	
2 Chronicles	Habakkuk	2 Thessalonians	
Ezra	Zephaniah	1 Timothy	
Nehemiah	Haggai	2 Timothy	
Esther	Zechariah		
Job	Malachi		
Psalms			
Proverbs			

Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

Questions:

- Why do you think on the sixth day, God saw all his work and called it “very good.?”
- What makes the seventh day, the Sabbath, special? Should we be like God and rest on the seventh day?
- Each day we read, “And God said...” Who do you think God was talking to? Do you think God is talking to us?
- God made mankind in his own image. God created man, and God created woman. Can we think of God as man? Can we think of God as woman?

About Genesis 1:1-2:3

This is the first of two creation stories in the Bible. This story begins with disorder and through God’s work the world becomes ordered.

Genesis 2:4-2:25

Questions:

- God made man to work the land. Is the writer telling us that we work for God?
- God gave man the responsibility to name all the animals. Do we have an obligation to care for all the animals?
- God took a rib from man and formed it into woman. Are man and woman the same?

About Genesis 2:3-2:25

This is the second of the two creation stories. Note this story does not have a timeline. This story connects mankind to the ground (in Hebrew, “Adamah”) by giving the man’s name as “Adam.” Also note that God gave the clay life by breathing into the figure’s nostrils.

Psalm 104

Questions:

- Does this psalm lead you to think that God is in control? What control do you think mankind has?
- How awesome is nature?
- “All creatures look to you to give them their food in the proper time.” Why should this apply to us? Or does it?

About Psalm 104:

Psalms are poems, specifically Hebrew poetry. This is a hymn to Creation, which reshapes the stories from Genesis to be more mythical. Though we often think of myths as fictional stories, myths can also touch upon some deep truths we hold in our hearts.

Psalm 8

Questions:

- How high above mankind did the writer place God? How big is God? Should we even try imagine God’s size?
- Though we are small in relationship to almighty God, how comforting is it that God cares about you?
- How would you feel if someone who is really important gave you responsibility to do a task?
- When you think of God coming to live among the people as Jesus, how amazing is it that God came to us in the form of a small, defenseless baby?

About Psalm 8:

This psalm reminds us of our relationship to God. It celebrates God’s glory.

What can we do as a family to care for God's Creation?

How should we treat our environment when the Bible (Psalm 24) tells us that all the earth is God's?

Is this world God's gift to us?

God gave dominion over Creation to humankind. How do we care for Creation?

What do you see as our biggest environmental problems?

That everything on earth is God's and God made us stewards of Creation, is it fair that people have to suffer without food?

Prayers

Listen to songs of our sacred Earth.

Hear the song in the gentleness of a babbling brook.

Hear the song in the birds at dawn.

Hear the song in the wind through the trees.

Touch the textures of our sacred Earth

Feel the warm dirt cradling the seeds.

Feel the cool shade of the forest on a hot summer day.

Feel the rough bark of an oak tree reaching to the sky.

Taste the flavors of our sacred Earth.

Savor the sweet nectar of honey.

Savor the spicy zest of chili pepper.

Savor the bright tartness of lemons.

Smell the scents of our sacred Earth

Inhale the air after a summer rain

Inhale the perfume of a lilac.

Inhale the briny ocean air at high tide.

Gaze upon the beauty of our sacred Earth

See the brilliant red in a cardinal against the winter snow

See the delicacy of cherry blossoms against the blue sky

See the symmetry in a scallop shell plucked from the sand.

O God, you established the foundations of the earth and set the stars in the sky, your Creation awakens all our senses making us feel alive. Though our promises to care for you Creation don't seem adequate enough, we humbly ask that you accept them. Amen.

I look up to the sky at night. The stars twinkle against its inky darkness. Hundreds of them, too numerous to count. This magnificent sight leaves me in awe, O God, that I am in this vast universe and that you know who I am. May I never take anything about your Creation for granted. Amen.

God of justice, you made us in your image and let us rule over all that swims in the sea, moves on the ground, and flies in the air. You gave us plants for food. You gave us charge of all of this. Jesus taught us to love one another as he loved us, to care for each other, and to ensure the common good. May we, O God, seek to fulfill Jesus' teachings to ensure that the abundance of your creation is enough for everyone. Amen.

Return blessings, O Holy Ones,
So life's cycles can continue with beauty, balance, and abundance
May life's cycles return blessings.

Return blessings, Sacred Earth,
So air, water, fire, and food can nourish all we hold dear.
May air, water, fire, and food return blessings.

Return blessings, Beloved Sisters and Brothers,
So all creation can share pleasure and do justice.
May all creation return blessings.

Return blessings, Crawling Creatures and Winged Friends,
So the earth can be renewed.
May the earth return blessings.

Return blessings, Trees, Flowers, Rivers, Mountains,
So nature can refresh our spirits.
May nature return blessings.

Return blessings, Stars, Moons, Planets, and Galaxies,
So wonder can nourish our visions.
May wonder return blessings.

Return blessings, Changing Seasons,
So life's cycles can end in peace.
May life's cycles return blessings.

*Diann L. Neu (from **Prayers for a Thousand Years**)*

Earthly Harmony

Lord, the land, water and
Plants are basic to our existence.
They mean the survival of
Generations. Grant that we may
Ever co-exist in harmony with the
Mountains and the rivers, our
Source of hope. May we continue
To use them for our good, as we
Have since time immemorial. We
Are saddened by those who
Unclothe our mountains and carry
Away the wealth of our lands.
Grant us strength to defend our
Environment, so needed for
Existence and survival, which you
Have given us in your bounty. Amen

Ibalot prayer from the Philippines (from *A Maryknoll Book of Prayer*)

Activities:

Map Genesis 1:1-2:3 using this template:

Day 1:	Day 4:
Day 2:	Day 5:
Day 3:	Day 6:
Day 7 Sabbath – Day of Rest	

1. What do you notice?
2. Does this tell you that God likes order?

Spend time outdoors sitting quietly for about 15 minutes around dawn. Listen carefully. Watch the sunrise if it is possible. Write down your thoughts and impressions.

Spend time outdoors sitting quietly for about 15 minutes around sunset. Listen carefully. Watch the sunset if possible. Write down your thoughts and impressions.

Go outside on a clear night. Look up at the stars. See how many constellations you can name.

Try to count the number of stars. (Websites for additional information):

<https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/whats-up-skywatching-tips-from-nasa/>

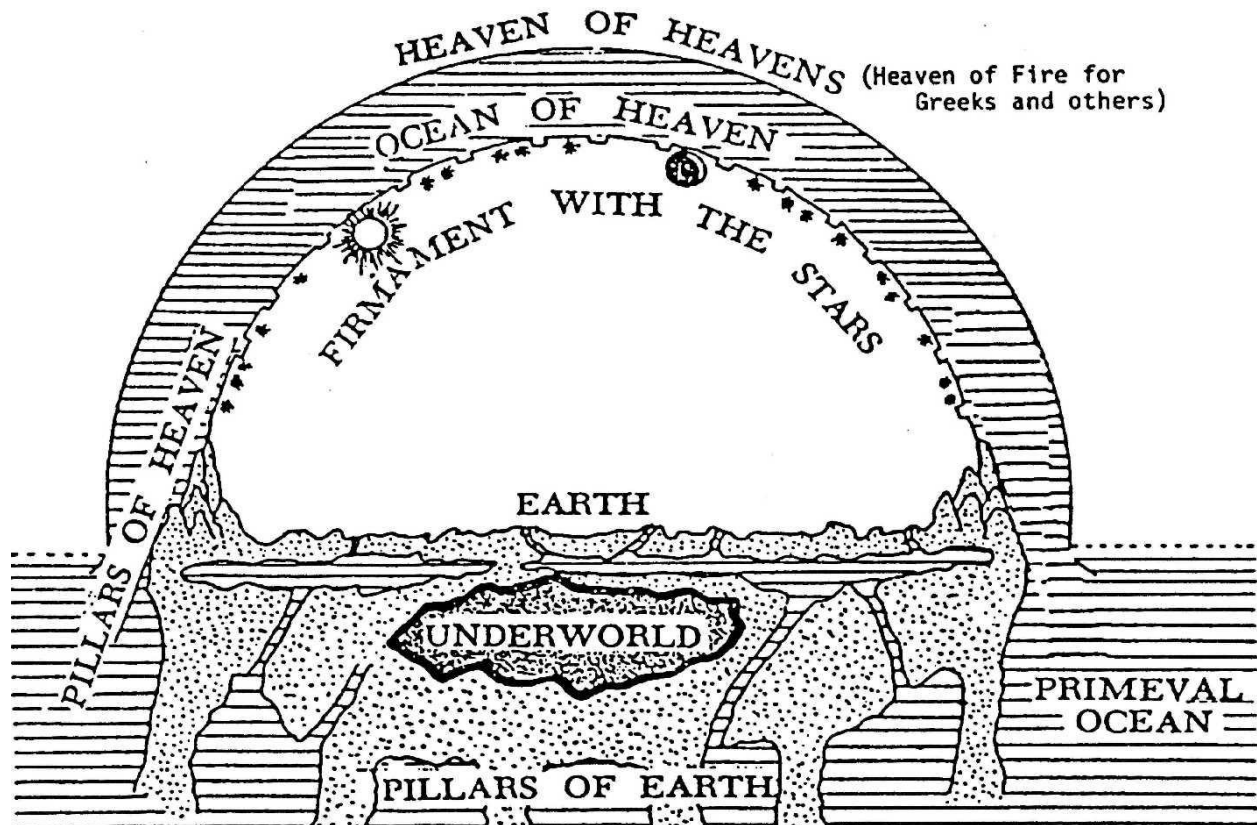
<https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/constellations/en/>

<http://www.seasky.org/astronomy/astronomy-calendar-2021.html>

Check out the full moon on May 26. It will be very close to the earth, so it should be very bright and large in the sky.

Plant a small garden, ideally with some vegetables. Take care of it. When you eat the produce, do you find you will appreciate them more?

Resource



This picture of the ancient Jewish understanding of the universe (cosmology) will make understanding the first creation story clearer. The earth began formless, empty, and dark. Water was everywhere. During the first three days of creation, God separated light and dark, waters above and waters below, and then land from water. Beginning with the fourth day, God made night and day, filled the air with birds and fish in the seas, and made vegetation, animals, and humankind.