

The Seven Days of Creation

Christian education activity inspired by the story in Genesis, Chapter 1

Objectives

After this activity, participants will be able to:

- Tell the story of Creation in Seven Days, in the proper order;
- Identify certain symbols, like the Word of God that creates, the word “good” at the end of each day, the human “in God’s image” and the Sabbath.
- Understand this story’s role, to answer “why” the sky and the earth were created, just as science answers “how” the sky and the earth were created.
- Be amazed, by the biodiversity in Creation;
- Become guardians of Creation through a personal commitment.

Duration

Duration: about 60 minutes

Material

- Picture Cards of the Seven Days (Annex)
- Projector
- Screen
- Laptop with video of the Seven Days

Suggested location

Location: some rooms



Activity outline for younger children

1. The activity leader tells an adapted version of the story of Creation in seven days.
2. In teams of two, the children try to put seven images of creation in the order of the story.
3. The activity leader compares the team’s results. If necessary, the children put their images in the right order.
4. Next, the activity leader plays the video “The Seven Days of Creation” on a computer.
5. The leader leads a discussion with the children.
6. A short prayer is said.
7. The children choose a personal commitment.

Activity outline for teenagers

1. In teams of two, the teens try to put the seven images of the creation in the order of the story.
2. The activity leader compares the teams.
3. The leader reads the story of Creation (Genesis chap.1) and/or shows the video “The Seven Days of Creation” on a computer. If necessary, the teens put their images in the right order.
4. The leader leads a discussion with the teens.
5. A short prayer is said.
6. The teens choose a commitment.



The Story of Creation in Seven Days

adapted from the book of Genesis chap. 1



In the beginning, there was nothing on the earth but emptiness, darkness, and a huge ocean. So God said a word and there was light. He created the day... But He separated it from the darkness, which he called the night.



On the second day, God divided the waters. He kept some to make the sea and put the rest above the sky. He put the atmosphere between the two. God saw that it was good.



On the third day, God put the oceans in the right place and dried out the land between them. He ordered the earth to grow trees and plants. God saw that it was good.



On the fourth day, he hung two big lights in the sky: one for the day and the other one for the night. He positioned the stars too. God saw that it was good.



On the fifth day, God created all the creatures that live in the water: fish, whales, dolphins... And then he also created all the birds that fly in the air, from the great eagle to the smallest sparrow. God saw that it was good.



On the sixth day, God created all the creatures that live on the land, from the biggest buffalo, elephants, and tigers to the littlest beetle that crawls in the grass. God saw that it was good.



Finally, God decided to create a man and a woman who resembled like Him to take care of the animals. And God saw that the created world was very good.

So, on the seventh day, God rested.

Video: The Seven Days of Creation



Download and watch this video at: www.vimeo.com/16999236

Discussion and questions

Good job! You've learned how the story of Creation goes.

Do you believe God created the heavens and the earth in only 7 days?

[Let them answer.]

Many say that this could not be possible. Do you know what? I don't believe that God managed to create all that in 7 days either. Even the most recent popes in the Catholic Church (since Pius XII in 1951) say that scientists have come to valid conclusions about how the earth was formed and about how life evolved on our planet.

Does the creation story contradict modern science? Why?

Yes.

According to some geologists (scientists who study the earth's crust), the earth is 4.5 billion years old. Scientists also say that life developed gradually over time, a process that is called 'evolution.' So, it seems that creation did not happen in seven days and that everything stayed the same after that.

According to some biologists (scientists who study living things), algae were the first life form that developed in the oceans. Then came the fish, next the animals on land, and last, the birds. So, days 5 and 6 of the story don't describe the same order of events as scientific research does.

Astronomers (scientists who study the stars) say that the sun "turned on" 4.5 billion years ago. Obviously, the sun had to be there to light up the earth. So, the story on days 1 through 4 does not exactly correspond to reality.

Meteorologists (scientists who study the atmosphere), say that the higher up you go in the atmosphere, the less air there is. When you reach a certain height (above 100 km), there is no air left at all; this is called a 'space vacuum.' The sky is blue because air molecules reflect the colour blue in the sun's light. On day 2 in the story, the waters below (the ocean) are separated from the waters above (the blue sky!). Oh yes, according to the biblical description, the sky is blue because there is water above the sky. And the skies have to open for there to be rain. (see Gn 7:11-12).

The story of Creation in the book of Genesis is not a "true" scientific description. So we shouldn't read it with scientists' eyes. But can this story be "true" anyway?

Even though this story does not describe how the earth was made (according to our advanced knowledge today), can it tell us why the heavens and the earth were created from nothing?

Instead of reading the story to find scientific answers, let's try looking for some deeper answers about our existence:



Who created the heavens and the earth?

God did; a benevolent God, who loves life and humankind.

It is not science that allows me to say that God created the heavens and the earth; it is faith that tells me.

For example, if your mother leaves you a note on the kitchen table, you know that she is the one who wrote it, even if she didn't sign it... You know her handwriting and the way she talks. In the same way, you can spend time in nature observing a plant or an animal and recognize the work of God in it.

Perhaps when you have seen beautiful scenery, you have felt something that is hard to describe. People who contemplate nature often find the presence of God in it.

How did God create the heavens and the earth?

God creates with his Word (And God said, "...").

First of all, this story reminds us how important speech is. Every time we say something, we are "building the world." Compare the number of compliments you gave in one day to the number of insults. What kind of world did you create?

This story also reminds us about something else: Jesus is the Word of God (see John chap. 1), and His Word has healed and saved many people. Even today, the Word of God is heard in the hearts of believers. The Word that creates is the Word that saves.

Multiple Choice: What word does the Bible use to describe the earth and its creatures?

- a) good
- b) bad
- c) neutral

Answer: a).



This simple word "good" might seem like a small detail, but it is very important. The other nations surrounding Israel, like the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, all had Creation myths. They believed that the world had been created after conflicts between the gods. For example, a god would cut off the arm of another god and it would fall to the ground, creating a chain of mountains. Then, further on in the story, a goddess would cry and her tears would fill up a salty sea. Others, like Neptune, the god of the ocean, were impatient and that would explain the storms and hurricanes. The other nations could not conceive the earth to be a good thing, because in many places, they believed that it was bad: malefic forests, damned caves, cursed valleys.

The story of Creation in the beginning of the Bible, inspired by great wisdom from God, invites us to view the world, the Creation of God, as a good thing. The great diversity of living things, including humans, makes it a very good thing!

Multiple Choice: You've read the poetic story of Creation (Genesis 1); which phrase best describes our environment?

- a) The environment is full of resources like wood, water, metal, and animals for us to use.
- b) The environment is bad because it is polluted and that makes people sick.
- c) The environment is a landscape for us to enjoy that we can look at like a big painting on a wall.
- d) The environment is God's creation, and all creatures were made by God so they deserve to be protected.

Answer: d).

Are humans different from other creatures? Why?

YES.

Humans were created, like the other creatures (by the Word), but we were created in God's image. Our conscience and our complex intelligence make us different from other creatures.

We are curious and creative. We can develop our intelligence to better understand the world and to invent new tools. We can also grow in wisdom in order to take better care of the world and to love it.

What is humanity's role in creation?

"Have dominion over the Earth and all its creatures" (Gn 1:28) is an expression that might sound anti-environmental these days. Humans are animals (because we have to eat, drink, sleep, etc.). Humans are also creatures of God and the word "human" is related to the words "humus" and "humility."

But humans are also co-creators. They are very intelligent and have the responsibility to rule wisely like a good king would (1 Kings 5:1; Wisdom 9:2).

So humans are the caretakers of creation; they must cultivate the earth and protect it for future generations (Genesis 2:15).

And what happened on the seventh day?

God rested. This is a very valuable lesson for us. We humans cannot always be running after the clock, never stopping. After working for six days of the week, we have to stop one day a week to spend time with our Creator, allowing us to renew our forces, build bonds with our community, and find meaning in our lives. Jews call this day the Sabbath. Christians chose Sunday as their day of rest.

Why are the sun and the moon called 'lights' and not their names?

Because the names "sun" and "moon" used to be the names of gods. For example, the Babylonians called the sun goddess Shamash and the moon god Sin. When people said these words, they thought of the gods in the sky, but there is only one God. So the author of the story of Creation chose to call them lights to show that these creatures obey God.

Why does the story go in the order of lights, fish, birds, and land animals?

Think about how on the first three days, God created spaces (light, the oceans, the sky, the land). On the next three days, he filled these spaces (the lights in the sky, the fish, the birds, the land animals).

Think about how in the beginning, the universe was empty and shapeless. Each stage gets closer to the reality that we know as humans. We live on the earth, so the land animals and the humans came on the last day. You could say that we are part of a family that keeps growing. We share a connection with the primates and mammals, and then with the reptiles and amphibians, then with the birds, fish, and invertebrates. The story of Creation reminds us of an important element of our existence: in the beginning, there was nothing, and today, there is an extraordinary diversity of life on earth. Obviously, it is “very good.” This biodiversity is amazing! Just look at how many different species there are now:

Mammals: 5,490

Reptiles: 9,084

Amphibians: 6,433

Birds: 9,998

Fish: 31,300

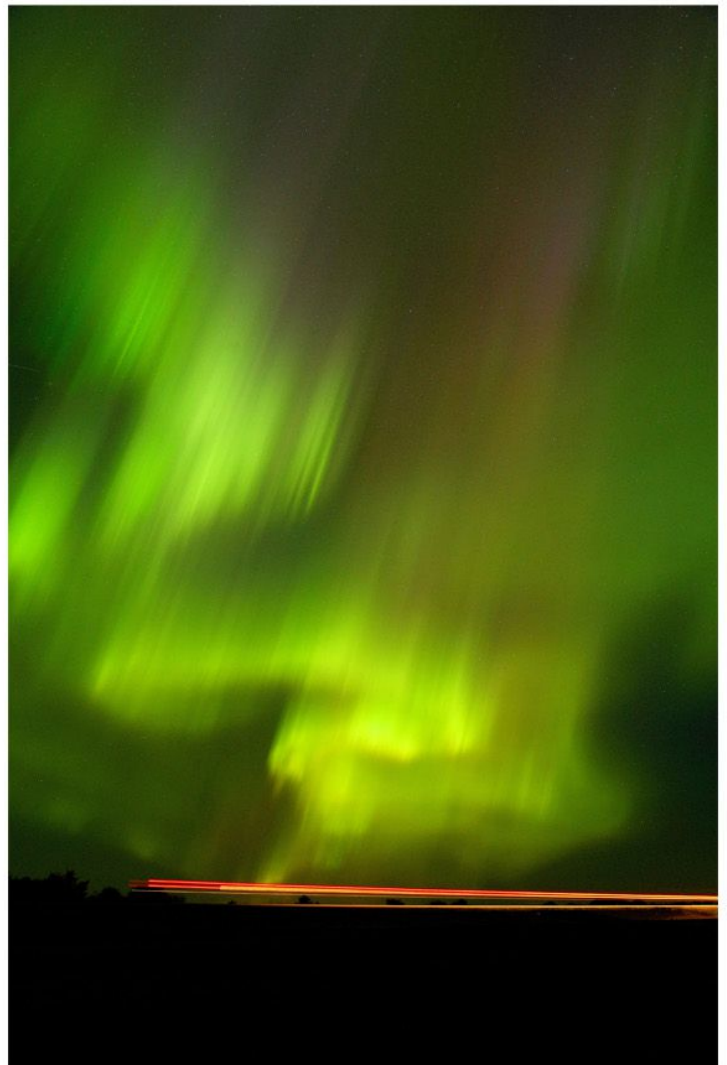
Invertebrates: 1,305,250

Reference: The World Conservation Union. 2010. IUCN

Prayer

God our Creator,
 We praise You in the light that warms us,
 In the air that sustains us,
 In the water that refreshes us,
 In the earth that nourishes us,
 In the fish that swim far off,
 In the birds that fly up high,
 In the animals that creep on the ground.
 We praise You especially on the day of rest, when
 we stop to contemplate Your Creation and to
 recognize You, God our Creator. **Amen.**

By Norman Lévesque



Choose a commitment

ACTION

- Recycle more often.
- Always write on both sides of a sheet of paper.
- Turn out the lights when no one is in the room.
- Take your bath or shower with less water.
- Take your bike or public transportation more often.
- And lots of other actions...

EDUCATION

- Find an environmental group on the Internet.
- Create a poster to increase awareness about an issue (conserve water, turn out the lights...)
- And anything you can say or write about the environment...

SPIRITUALITY

- Thank God when you hear a bird singing.
- Thank God for clean water, the source of life.
- Thank God for the air that fills your lungs.
- Thank God for the earth that carries us and feeds us.
- Pray to become a better caretaker of Creation.
- And any prayer that you can say to thank the Creator...



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