



GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

MODULE ONE

SESSION 1

In this session, we will explore the beautiful, diverse world God created (Genesis 1:1-25). Each student will learn about God's artistry and intentionality in fashioning creation. We will explore how God made creation and why God chose to make the world diverse, full of variety, calling it good.

KEY POINT: God purposefully created a diverse world with a variety of plants, animals, and landforms and called it good.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

30 MINUTES

For your reference, a list of all links are available at covchurch.org/justicejourney/

Session

1 Creation and Diversity

KEY WORD

DIVERSITY: When God created the world and everything in it, God made things to be different on purpose. God made a variety of animals, plants, and people and called them all very good.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Name tags
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Magazine pages or printed images of several kinds of animals, plants, and land/water formations (Images of diverse animals, plants, and crops):
drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eedEHBCZQ8iMKjUES5pc_dbCtO7B4sla
- Bible (preferably a New International Reader's Version)
- Drawing paper
- Air dry clay: amazon.com/LOUFOR-Air-Dry-Clay-Kits/dp/B0DN27RZPG
- A potted plant (optional)
- Gardening supplies (optional)
- Fruits and veggies
- Fruit and vegetable wash and water
- Blender
- Small cups
- A piece of easel pad paper

PREPARATION

- **Review** Genesis 1:1-25 for the lesson.
- **Gather the magazine or printed images** of animals, plants, and land/water formations. A bank of images can be found here: [Images of diverse animals, plants, and crops](#)
- **Set the Bible** in your storytelling area where all the students can see and hear you.
- **Set out markers or crayons and drawing paper** in the storytelling area as well. If there is no table where you are telling the story, consider using hardbound books or clipboards to give students a surface to draw on.
- **Set up your potted plant and gardening supplies** you would use to show students how to care for the plant. Maybe a grow light, some water, a trowel, and a small amount of fertilizer. (Optional)
- **Set up a blender, fruit and veggie wash, fruits and veggies, and water.** Have your smoothie cups—premade and stored in a refrigerator, or—ready to fill and pass out if you decide to make a smoothie in real time.
- **Print and prepare** the homework to pass out to students at the end of class time.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Name tags and markers

As students arrive in your space, greet them warmly and offer them a name tag to personalize.

Spend time with them, asking questions like,

- *What made you happy this week?*
- *What is your favorite animal?*
- *Would you rather spend a weekend at the beach, in the mountains, or in a rainforest?*
- *What is your favorite fruit or vegetable?*

OPENING PRAYER

Gather students in a circle for opening prayer. Explain we are entering a special time with God. Encourage children to hold their palms up as a sign we are ready to receive what God shares with us today. You may want to light a candle as a sign that God will show us how to light our way in love when we find ourselves in a dark or difficult place.

PRAY: God you are so loving, and everything you create comes from love. You made the animals, plants, waterways, and landforms of the earth so beautiful, and diverse. You made your good creation different on purpose. Because of your love for the world, you sent your son Jesus to save us. We look forward to what we will learn from you today and how it will help us to love you and your good creation in the same ways you love us. Amen.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Several pictures of animals, plants, natural water/land formations

Arrange students into three groups and give each a set of pictures. Let them talk about what their pictures have in common and how they are different. Encourage each student to contribute a thought to the group.

EXPLAIN: Your pictures are all the same type of thing—animals, plants, the earth—but they are also different. They

are diverse. There is variety in the type of thing—animals, plants, the earth. Diversity is difference or variety in the same type of thing. When God created the world and everything in it, God made things different on purpose. God made a variety of plants, animals, and people and called them good. Talk in your groups about why it is so good to have lots of different kinds of animals, plants, and nature.

ASK: Why are you glad there is diversity and more than one type of animal, plant, and nature?

Listen as kids talk and repeat ideas that stand out: how boring it would be to have the same kind of flowers at your house as everyone else; how uninteresting it would be to eat the same kind of desert, meal, or drink only one drink every day; how sad if everyone only had one kind of pet?

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, drawing paper, crayons, pictures that show the diversity of creation, air dry clay

Gather students in your storytelling area. Invite them to listen carefully to the story from the Bible and to draw what they hear. It may be helpful to read through the text more than once so the students can reflect further as they draw.

READ GENESIS 1:1-25 ALOUD TO CLASS.

ASK: What kinds of things has God made so far? *Encourage them to share their pictures. Emphasize what each student noticed (not the quality of their drawing skills).*

EXPLAIN: God has made a lot of things in our Bible story! God must be powerful and creative! And, God's creation continues.

Now we're coming to a really important part. Turn over your paper and put your markers down so you won't be distracted.

God is the Creator of the world and everything good in it. God created plants, animals, and the earth we live in. God created different animals, and there is even variety within the different types of animals God created.

Think about dogs and cats. Not all dogs are the same, there are bulldogs, golden retrievers, chihuahuas, and labradoodles. And not all cats are the same. There are big cats and small cats. Some cats are house pets, and others live in places like the jungle. There are house cats like Siamese cats, and big cats like lions, jaguars, and cheetahs.

Just as God created animals with variety, God also created people, lakes, oceans, and mountains diverse. God created diversity and called it good. Next week we will talk about the diverse ways God created people.

Have students make an animal with air dry clay.

Application Activity

Gather the students as a group in a large circle.

EXPLAIN: We are going to move our bodies in ways that help us remember God's diverse creation. I will give you a prompt, and then you will use your body to show what I describe.

- God made trees. Let's make a tree with our bodies.
- God made penguins. Let's walk like penguins.
- God made animals. Let's pause and think of your favorite animal. Now make it with your body.
- God made water. Think of your favorite thing to do on, in, or with water. Now act this out with your body.

Feel free to add more creative movement ideas.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: A potted plant, OR a blender, fruits, veggies, and fruit and vegetable wash.

Bring out the potted plant, or blender, fruits, veggies, and fruit and vegetable wash.

EXPLAIN: We love and care for a plant by watering it, tilling the soil, and positioning it to get sunlight. Some people even talk to their plants! While plants do not talk back to us, talking to plants is a way that some people show they care for their plants.

Our food is grown from the land and has vitamins, nutrients, and good things that our bodies need. While some people love fruits and do not like veggies, other people prefer veggies to fruits. Our bodies need both. One of the beautiful things about the plant diversity God has gifted the world with is that we get a chance to mix and match fruits and veggies, both of which make us healthy and strong and are delicious and nutritious.

Show students how to wash fruits and veggies. Model making a smoothie and distribute small premade portions

of the smoothie for students to enjoy. Ask them questions about the diverse fruits and veggies included in the smoothie.

ASK:

- What flavors do you taste?
- Which flavor is the strongest?
- How would the smoothie taste different if we did not use diverse ingredients?

EXPLAIN: A smoothie is a good example of how we as the people of God are better together. What we are together is so much better than what we are alone!

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: A piece of easel pad paper and markers

EXPLAIN: Next week we will learn about the image of God, and what it means that we are made in God's image. As we close, let's briefly talk about two things that being made in God's image means:

- It means we are connected to the rest of creation. God created us, and God also created everything we learned about today.
- People are the only part of creation made in God's image (we'll learn all about this next week). We are made in God's image to show the world what God is like. We can do some things like God. One thing the Bible explains that we are responsible for doing like God is loving, protecting, and caring for creation.

So as we close, let's think together about some ways we can love, protect, and care for creation.

Ask the students to come up with a list of ways we can care for the earth. Aim for 10 ideas. Some suggestions are starting to recycle at home, starting to recycle at church, making art out of recycled goods, community cleanups, picking up litter around the church, doing a beach or park cleanup day (before playing), reusing things before throwing them away, avoiding plastic products, conserving water, conserving energy, starting to compost, the class planting a few new plants in planter bags, the class planting a few new trees (if there's room on the church grounds), the church starting a community garden, congregants riding their bikes for shorter trips to eliminate air pollution, feeding animals (like birds) with adult supervision.

EXPLAIN: When we take care of the earth, it takes care of us. We need the earth and its plants, water, air, and animals to be healthy, happy, and whole. And the land, water, air, and animals need us to love, protect, and care for them in ways that God tells us to in the Bible for them to be healthy and provide what we need as humans. We really do need each other.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank you, God, for the way you made diversity in creation. Help us to care for your good creation, and to help others understand why it is so important to care for our beautiful world. Help us to be kind to all the amazing animals, plants, trees, rivers, lakes, oceans, and waterways you created and called good. Amen.

Homework

- Memory verses: Genesis 1:1
- Do this maze: drive.google.com/file/d/1FTCDsHdOXTnYXJTIQaNBdUTUJayb9_q/view
- Bring a picture of your pet(s) or favorite animal with you to class next week.



GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

MODULE ONE

SESSION 2

In this session we will further explore the biblical story of creation (Genesis 1 and 2) and unpack what it means to be made in the image of God. We will learn how being made in God's image connects us to the rest of creation and that we are called to care for the community of creation in ways that express God's love, care, and kindness. We will examine the ways in which all people are equally created in God's image. Each child will hear that they are made by God and loved by God; they will explore how they and those around them reflect God's image through the diverse ways God created them and the rest of God's good creation.

KEY POINTS: We are created in God's image and are called to love and care for creation as God would. All people are equally created in God's image. God created us for healthy, reciprocal, relationships. As we care for, protect, and love God's good creation, it cares for us in return.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

30 MINUTES

For your reference, a list of all links are available at covchurch.org/justicejourney/

Session

The Community of Creation and Diversity

KEY WORDS

IMAGE OF GOD: We are created in God's image, and are responsible for loving, protecting, and caring for creation as God would.

RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS: A relationship is how we are connected to another person, animal, or creation. Reciprocal means both parts of a relationship give and receive love, kindness, and care.

SUBDUE: As people made in God's image, we are responsible for loving, protecting, and caring for creation as God would. We nurture—rather than abuse—animals, plants, and the earth.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- A Bible (preferably a New International Reader's Version)
- Drawing paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Media player
- Student's picture of their pet or favorite animal
- Poster board or large sticky easel pad
- Small Post-Its
- Sticky backed name tags (6 per student)
- Pictures of diverse communities of people: drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gs9us7BXT-nb2kRxmjGoAHZH7nTvQZ4

- A large rectangular pan
- Dish soap
- Cooking oil
- Paper towels
- Cotton balls
- 2 tin pie pans
- Medicine droppers or pipettes

PREPARATION

- **Review** the following Bible passages:
 - Genesis 1:26-31
 - Genesis 2:1-3
 - Genesis 2:19-20
 - Romans 8:19-21
 - Revelation 22:2
- **Prep name tags** for opening activity: For the opening activity, write "God made..." on one name tag per student so students can write their names. Put these, along with the markers, somewhere the students will see when they enter your environment.

The remaining 5 sticky tags per student should be left blank for the students to write on during the closing activity.

- **Write a large T-chart** on the poster board. On one side, write "All People." On the other side write "Some People." Hang it on the wall in your room.
- **Write various characteristics** on post it notes, such as: have black hair, wear glasses, can see, think, plan, dream, can hear, need rest, can walk, have a home to live in, have brothers and sisters, like pizza, have brown skin, need food, have food every day, need love, need respect, need to brush their teeth, etc. Make sure to list things for all people that will help students see that everyone reflects God's image; and use specific things from your community that some people—those around you or those who are different from you—have, look like, or do.
- **Prep instructions** for the Oil Spill Cleanup Activity. Instructions found here: drive.google.com/file/d/1eFrZ6Lgpmx95jC3NM4fkauRo1TYEfaF7/view
- **Cue and watch** the *Children & Families Around the World* video: youtube.com/watch?v=y2r2C26RCYs

- **Print and prepare** the homework to pass out to students at the end of class time.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Sticky backed name tags, prepared as described above; markers

As students arrive in your space, greet them warmly and offer them a name tag to personalize. Spend time with them, asking questions like:

- What is something beautiful you noticed in creation this week?
- Where did you see diversity in creation this week?
- How did you get your name?
- What is the best thing about being born in your birth month?
- Who do you like to spend time with on the weekends?

PRAYER

Gather students in a circle for opening prayer. Explain we are in a relationship with God, and we are entering into a special time with God. Encourage children to hold their palms up as a sign we are ready to receive what God shares with us today. You may want to light a candle as a sign that God will show us how to light our way in love when we find ourselves in a dark or difficult place.

PRAY: God, you love each of us and you made all of us differently on purpose. As different people we find our common purpose in you. Because of your love for the world, you offer each of us eternal life through your son Jesus. This morning, we ask you to fill us with your Spirit so we may be guided by you. We look forward to what we will learn from you today and how it will help us to love the world in the same way you love us. Amen.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Markers and drawing paper

Have the students draw a picture of a loving relationship with an animal, plant, or person in their life.

EXPLAIN: A relationship is how we are connected or related to another person, animal, or the earth. We might have relationships with our friends, family, pets, plants, or gardens. When we have relationship with a group, like a team, class, or a few friends, that is called community.

ASK:

- Who is a part of your community?
- What are the good things/gifts of being a part of a community?
- What are the challenging things about being a part of a community?
- Have you ever become part of a new community?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Picture of student's pet(s) or favorite animal

Divide students into groups of four (or smaller, for smaller groups) and give each student two minutes to talk about their picture and what their animal or pet means to them. If a student did not bring a picture, they can describe their pet or favorite animal. Tell the students to come back prepared to tell the class about what another student in their group shared (the student's name, the name of their pet or favorite animal, and why this animal matters to their peer).

EXPLAIN: Our pets are a part of our family; animals are a part of our community. We love them, care for them, and make sure that we give them everything they need. Even though this is true, when most people talk about community, they only talk about community as a group of people instead of talking about loving our pets and the animals in our community, caring for them, and making sure that we give them everything they need.

The Bible tells us we are a part of a community that is bigger than just people. We are a part of a community of creation. The community of creation is everything good God made. And as members of this community, we have

a part to play, or a job to do within the community of creation.

The point is to show interest in the students as individuals who are made and loved by God, and to notice their connection to other parts of the community of creation—the animals, plants, and people around them who also have been made and loved by God.

ASK: Do you have jobs to do at home (like clean your room, put your dirty clothes in the hamper, or put your dishes in the sink)?

EXPLAIN: When you are a part of a community, there are joys and responsibilities. Joys are gifts that make us happy, feel loved, valued, and appreciated. Responsibilities are the things that we do to show our appreciation, love, and care for other members of our community.

The Bible tells us that the first role/job/responsibility God gave us as humans is to take care of creation—the plants, lakes, rivers, oceans, air, and animals. God is all about relationships, and the relationships God created us to have are good, and reciprocal—which means both members of the relationship give and receive good things from being in the relationship.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, drawing paper, crayons, flat surfaces for students to write on, and a diverse set of illustrations of community

Gather students in your storytelling area. Invite them to listen carefully to the story from the Bible and to draw what they hear. It may be helpful to read through the text more than once so the students can reflect further as they draw.

EXPLAIN: Last week we learned about how creative God is. We learned that God created diversity. We learned why diversity is a gift from God and where we see diversity in our beautiful world. As a reminder, diversity means having variety or differences within the same type of thing. God made a variety of plants, animals, and planets and called them good. When God created the world and everything in it, God made things differently on purpose. Nothing was created how it is by accident. We learned that when there is diversity, some things are the same (like a dog), and some things are different (there are different types of dogs, like bulldogs, golden retrievers, chihuahuas,

and labradoodles). God created things to be diverse on purpose and called them good.

This week we are going to learn about how God created people, intentionally made us diverse, and made us a little different from the rest of creation. God lovingly made people different (diverse), with a variety of skin colors, types of hair, and shapes for our eyes, noses, and lips. God made us with variety on purpose, called these differences good, and loves us all equally.

HAVE A STUDENT READ GENESIS 1:26-28.

ASK: What does it mean to be made in God's image?

Allow for answers but recognize that most students won't know what that means. Ensure them we will be learning what it means today.

EXPLAIN: While God created everything good, God also created people with something special. People are the only part of creation made in God's image. We are made in the image of God to show the world what God is like. Being made in God's image means that we can do some things like God.

We can plan, dream, create, and decide because God does these things.

ASK: What are some things that you have created or dreamed about?

EXPLAIN: One thing the Bible explains that we are responsible for doing like God is loving, protecting, and caring for creation. Our relationship with God helps us to understand how we can help and love other people and take care of creation with God's help. God cares for and supports all of creation. Every single person gets to care for creation with God's help. That is part of what it means to be made in the image of God. Together, with God's help, we can reflect God's love to each other, and the rest of creation.

ASK: What does it mean to love one another?

EXPLAIN: No one knows what the first people looked like, sounded like, or smelled like. We do not know their skin color or hair color, but the variety of people in the world clearly show God's plan for making people different. Some people have brown eyes, some have blue eyes, and others have green or black eyes. Some people even have purple or yellowish eyes. There are short people and tall people; people with skin colors that are every shade from black to brown, golden, and cream.

Show pictures of diverse communities of people.

drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gs9us7BXT-_nb2kRxmjGoAHZH7nTvQZ4

EXPLAIN: No matter how they look, humans were intentionally created to be diverse by God. Just like our world is better and more interesting because of the diversity God created in nature, the same is true because God made people diverse. None of us looks, acts, or thinks the same. This means we can learn from each other and see more of who God is as we get to know one another, since we are all uniquely made in God's image. The diversity God made people with makes our lives and relationships better. Diversity is a precious gift from God.

SELECT TWO STUDENTS TO READ GENESIS 1:29-2:3 AND 2:19-20.

ASK:

- What instructions does God give?
- Who does God give these instructions to?
- What relationships does God begin to describe?
- Why do you think that God rested after calling everything good on the seventh day?

EXPLAIN: Now we are coming to a really important part. Turn over your paper and put your markers down so you will not be distracted.

In **Genesis 1:28**, God tells humans to grow the human family. Isn't it interesting that before God said this to humans, before God even made humans, God told the great creatures of the sea and every winged bird the exact same thing: "Be fruitful and increase in number"? God gives the animals the same instructions as humans, but God also has a different role for humans as the only members of the community of creation who are made in God's image.

We heard the words "subdue" and "rule over" in these verses.

ASK: What do you think God means by these words?

EXPLAIN: While some people believe these words mean that we can do whatever we want to creation and animals—treating them meanly, without respect, and taking whatever we want from them—this is not what God means. What God is saying here is that as people made in God's image, we are the ones responsible for loving, protecting, and caring for creation as God would. God wants us to have a loving relationship with the rest of creation. We see

this is **Genesis 2:19-20** when God introduces humans to the animals and they get to know and name every animal.

God invited humans to have a relationship with the rest of creation and together we make up the community of creation. Giving something a name is a special act of love that happens in close relationships. God wants us to be in close, loving relationships with the animals, plants, and the land we all live on.

ASK: How have you cared for creation (plants, animals, or the land) as God would?

Collect and affirm answers.

EXPLAIN: When we care for creation as God wants us to, the earth, its animals, and humans are all healthy. When we do not care for creation the way God wants us to, we all experience sickness. When we do not live and love like God tells us to, suffering enters the world.

God loves relationships. The community of creation is held together by God's love and a web of healthy relationships where both parts of a relationship give and receive love, support, kindness, and care. This kind of relationship is called a reciprocal relationship. Here are a few examples of that kind of relationship:

- We are created in God's image, which means we have a unique relationship with God.
- We were formed from the earth, and given life from God's breath, which means we also have a special relationship with the earth.
- **Genesis 2** tells us that God also created every animal from the earth, which means we and animals have this in common (the difference is that we were made in God's image).
- Our relationship with animals started when God gave the first person the job of naming every animal. When you name something, you spend time getting to know it. You learn about, appreciate, and value it.

These are all examples of relationships God created us to have. Each of these is a reciprocal relationship where we give and receive love, care, and the things we need. We were created to have a reciprocal relationship with God, each other, and every part of the community of creation.

Have students color this picture: drive.google.com/file/d/1UPswTsoPngadMEsXN4qfMurZ5LwMjq3/view

EXPLAIN: Since too many people have not cared for

creation the way God created us to, creation is unhealthy. **Romans 8:19-21** tells us that creation is crying out to God, asking for healing. The good news is that God is inviting you and me to help love, care for, and heal creation. As we love the community of creation, we help improve other people's relationship with the community of creation. People watch us and learn from us.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: A large rectangular pan, dish soap, cooking oil, paper towels, cotton balls, 2 tin pie pans, and medicine droppers or pipettes

Conduct the [Oil Spill Cleanup Activity](#).

EXPLAIN: The good news is that the Bible tells us in Revelation that one day God will use creation to heal us! **Revelation 22:2** tells us God will use "the leaves of the tree" of life "for the healing of the nations." That means God will use creation to heal all people, from every place in the world. Isn't this great news?

When **Revelation 22:2** talks about the nations, it is talking about the way God made people diverse and how people from different parts of the world worship God in different ways and have different cultures. And guess what? God created it this way and called it good!

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Media player

Watch the [Children & Families Around the World](#) video.

ASK:

- How did the people in this video look like you? How were they different?
- Did you see any styles of clothing, houses, school, or food that were different from yours?
- What do you think those different things tell us about God's image?
- How were the people in this video like you/your family/your friends?
- What do you think those same things tell us about God's image? Why did God make us both different and the same?

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Sticky backed name tags, markers

Give each student 5 name tags and direct students to write each of the following on their name tags:

- God made you!
- God loves you!
- You are special!
- You are loved!
- You are made in God's image!

Encourage students to think of five people to give a name tag to. Explain that the name tags are reminders of God's love for our community. As students give their name tags, remind them to say, "You are made in God's image and loved by God!"

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank you, God, for the way you made us to be in relationships. We are grateful for our relationship with you, each other, and the community of creation. We are grateful that you made us in your image, and we ask for your help in loving, protecting, and caring for your good creation as you would. Help us to remember that when we care for creation, it cares for us, giving us all the things we need to live a healthy life. Amen.

Homework

- Memory verse: Genesis 1:27
- Color this picture: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vKHQ3RPb72PfR3RMxCywik1FgVkDSeTx/>
- Create this self-portrait: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12Q-ErtvnbmfOIApvxwo7oRS8ucfQ97h5/>

GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

MODULE ONE

SESSION 3

In this session we will learn about Pentecost, which is commonly regarded as the birth of the church. We will discover why diversity in culture, ethnicity, gifts, and roles in the church are vital to the body of Christ's witness in the world. Each child will hear about different cultural practices and approaches to worship in churches worldwide and affirm their own place in the local church.

KEY POINT: All people are created uniquely by God and welcomed by Jesus into the family of God, the church.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

30 MINUTES

For your reference, a list of all links are available at covchurch.org/justicejourney/

Session #

3 The Church and Diversity

KEY WORDS

DIVERSITY: When God created the world and everything in it, God made things to be different on purpose. God made a variety of animals, plants, and people and called them all very good.

IMAGE OF GOD: We are created in God's image, and are responsible for loving, protecting, and caring for creation as God would.

SIN: Anything against what God wants. Sin causes us to disobey God, hurt or ignore others rather than help them, and creates brokenness in our world. Sin spreads like a sickness, moving through people, communities, and laws to work against God's love.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Bible (preferably a New International Reader's Version)
- Drawing paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Media player
- Human Bingo page, one per student, like this one (or make your own): scholastic.com/content/dam/parents/migrated-assets/blogs/body-text-images-5/meet-new-friend-bingo-game.png
- Map of the known world at the time of Christ like this one, one per student: generationword.com/framework_images/81_map_lands_pentecost.gif

- Modern-day map of the locations of the countries mentioned in Acts 2 like this one, one per student [google.com/maps/place/Mediterranean+Sea/@36.6223748,-2.9445746,4z/](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Mediterranean+Sea/@36.6223748,-2.9445746,4z/)
- Printed images from the *Covenant Companion*. (Alternatively, if your church has access to missionary, outreach, or evangelism magazines or bulletins, consider using those.)
- Poster board
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Toothpicks
- Small marshmallows
- Paper plates

PREPARATION

- **Review Acts 2:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27** for this lesson. Make sure you can point out where the mentioned countries in Acts 2:1-12 would be located on the ancient world map as well as on the modern map. (You may need to practice some of the countries' names out loud a few times.)
- **Cue and watch** the *Praises Heard Around the World* video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-x7Yu-3cF8>
- **Make copies** of the Human Bingo page.
- **Make copies** of the two maps.
- **On the poster board, draw a large outline** of a cross for kids to fill with pictures of the diverse churches.
- **Use the masking tape to mark out a large rectangle** on the floor of your room. Make it large enough for your whole group to stand inside.
- **Print and prepare** the homework to pass out to students at the end of class time.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Drawing paper and markers

As students arrive in your space, greet them warmly and offer them some markers and drawing paper. Ask them to draw the best part of being at church. Spend time with them, asking:

- Do you remember (last year's VBS, being in the preschool class, etc.)?
- I remember the first time you came to church/when we first met. I felt ...
- What is your favorite thing we do here at (Sunday school/children's church/student's club)?
- Have you ever visited a different church? What was the church or experience like?

Prompt students to share positive memories and experiences of your church and other worship gatherings they may have attended.

PRAYER

Gather students in a circle for opening prayer. Explain we are entering a special time with God. Encourage children to hold their palms up as a sign we are ready to receive what God shares with us today. You may want to light a candle as a sign that God will show us how to light our way in love when we find ourselves in a dark or difficult place.

PRAY: God, you love each of us and you made us diverse (different) on purpose. Because of your love for us, you offer each of us eternal life through your son Jesus and fill us with your Spirit so we may be guided by you. We look forward to what we will learn from you about the Holy Spirit today and how it will help us to love others in the same way you love us. Amen.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Human Bingo sheet for each person, markers, small prizes (optional)

Hand each student a sheet and encourage them to ask friends to sign a square that could apply to them. For

smaller classes or groups you could sit and work through the whole bingo card and see how many match and how many are unique to each student. If you have a very small group, you could do this in the beginning of church when parents are doing drop-off and there is a larger cross-section of your community.

EXPLAIN: We have a lot of diversity right here in this church! Do you remember that diversity means having variety or differences within the same type of thing? I'm glad we have lots of different kinds of people in our church because that reminds us that God made each of us to be different on purpose and loves each of us equally.

Sometimes, because of sin, one group of people believes they are made more in God's image, better than, and more important than others. When this happens, the group that thinks they are better begins to mistreat others and works to keep themselves separate from the people who they believe are not as good or as important as they are.

ASK:

- What might it look like if only one kind of person—like people who believed red was the best and only color needed, or who ate pancakes for breakfast every day and did not believe that any other food was really breakfast—was allowed in the church?
- How would you feel about this?
- How do you think God would feel about this?
- Who do you think God wants you to invite to the church?
- Why do you think this is important to God?

EXPLAIN: Let's look at what God has to say about this in the Bible.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, maps, markers

Gather students in your storytelling area. Invite them to listen carefully to the story from the Bible.

READ ACTS 2:1-4 TWICE, INVITING DIFFERENT STUDENTS TO READ EACH TIME.

Now read the passage out loud one more time, and encourage the students to draw what they imagine the coming of the Spirit looked like as you read it for the final time.

EXPLAIN: Pentecost was a Jewish spring harvest festival, but now we use the word Pentecost to remember when Jesus's disciples received the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God whom Jesus promised he would give to everyone who follows him. God loves us so much that just as God lovingly breathed the breath of life into us, our Creator now also breathes God's Holy Spirit into us. The Holy Spirit is God within us, helping us to understand the Bible and showing us how to love others and creation as we live for God.

ASK: What did God give the disciples to help them share Jesus's love with others? (*Answer: The Holy Spirit*)

EXPLAIN: Now let's look and listen to **Acts 2:5-12** to see how this gift from God was used to love others.

HAVE A STUDENT READ ACTS 2:5-8, AND YOU (OR ANOTHER ADULT) READ VERSE 9-12.

Read slowly so that students can hear all the different places people came from at Pentecost. Use the ancient map and the modern map to show these places. Mark each location with a marker.

Pair the students up and give each pair a set of maps and two markers. Encourage them to work together and mark the places on the maps as you read.

EXPLAIN: This is a really big story! Before this story, people had to go to one kind of place to worship God—the Temple. The priests leading the services spoke only one language, and only one kind of service happened there. If you didn't speak that language or didn't understand that service, you couldn't worship God with God's people.

ASK:

- How do you think that made people who did not understand and who could not participate feel?
- Do you think that is what God wanted?

EXPLAIN: The reason all those people from all those countries and cities were gathered in Jerusalem is because of Pentecost, the big spring harvest festival. People traveled from all over to worship God at the Temple and celebrate what God had done for God's people.

But when God sent the Holy Spirit to Jesus's followers, God was doing something new. God was saying that from now on, people can worship God anywhere they are. They don't have to become a citizen of a specific place or learn a new language or travel to a far country to worship God;

God wants a loving relationship with all people—that’s why Jesus came to earth. Peter and Jesus’s other followers now had power and boldness to travel and tell everyone the good news about Jesus and that God had given us a new way to worship.

ASK:

- Why is it good news that we can worship God anywhere, and not just in one temple?
- Is there someone in your life that you can tell about God’s love?

EXPLAIN: This new way to worship and know God swept everywhere in the world. On our maps, all the countries and cities that our Bible story mentioned seem clumped up in one tiny spot, but if you look at the ancient world map, it looks like God wanted to have a relationship with people literally all over the world. The Romans, who were in charge when this part of the Bible was written, hadn’t explored the whole planet, just some areas in Asia, Africa, and Europe. But the roads and ports they built made it possible for the disciples to tell others outside of Palestine about Jesus.

ASK:

- Who does God want to have a relationship with?
- How can we help people begin a relationship with God?
- The people who learned about God were diverse. They spoke different languages, lived in different parts of the world, and looked different. What does this tell us about God’s family, the church?

EXPLAIN: People call this passage in **Acts 2** “the birth of the church,” because it’s when God let everyone know that the new plan for worship and relationship was for everyone. From there, people who worshiped God and followed Jesus began to gather wherever they were to celebrate what God had done through Jesus. Those groups were called churches—and they still are!

ASK:

- Did you know that Pentecost is the church’s birthday?
- How do you think we could celebrate and worship God for the church’s birthday?
- What do you think the good news of Jesus is?

EXPLAIN: Because of God’s love for the world, God sent us Jesus, a Savior who frees us and our world from sin’s power. Sin is like a sickness leading us away from God and keeping us from loving like God wants us to. Jesus’s life shows us how to obey God and what it means to truly love

one another as God wants. Jesus loved the world so much that he came from heaven and died on the cross to free all of creation from sin’s power and the death sin causes. Jesus forgives all our sins. Then Jesus fills us with the Spirit of God to guide us, so we can fulfill God’s plan to make God’s name known and love shown everywhere we go.

ASK:

- What kinds of people do you think God wanted to be part of these new churches?
- Do you have a story with Jesus? (Let children know that each story is different, because we are all different.)
- Who does God welcome into the church?

EXPLAIN: Everyone is welcome to become a part of God’s family (the church). The church is the place where we learn about Jesus, experience God’s love, become Jesus’s disciple, and learn to live and love like Jesus. If you are not sure you are a disciple of Jesus but want to be, we can talk it over and pray with your parents after class.

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Prepared poster board, glue sticks, scissors, magazine pages or printed images of several different church buildings and services. (Use the images from the *Covenant Companion*. Make sure the congregations and the people in the pictures represent a good breadth of diversity).

Invite students to look through the magazine pictures or printed images and talk about what kinds of churches they see there. What are the buildings like? What are people wearing? What languages are their signs/lyrics in?

When students gravitate toward a certain picture, encourage them to cut it out carefully and glue it onto the poster board, around the cross outline. Try to fill up all the negative space around the cross outline.

EXPLAIN: We are all different kinds of people in different kinds of churches. God planned for diversity in the church, but we all have this in common: Jesus loves us, we love Jesus, and Jesus commands us to love one another.

Guide students to talk about ways that churches worship God that are the same everywhere and different everywhere.

ASK

- What are some different ways we can worship God? (Option: Do this as a charades game.)
- Why is it good that Jesus can be worshiped in many ways?
- What might we learn from the way others worship Jesus?
- Do you think God delights in the diverse ways people worship? Why?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Toothpicks, small marshmallows

Divide into groups of three or four and give each group a handful of noodles and marshmallows. Tell them their goal is to build the biggest strongest structure they can build with those materials.

When all the teams have made their structures, remark on what is the same and what is different about each one.

EXPLAIN: When God began to build a church with people who would tell the whole world about the good news, God used many different kinds of people so there would be many different kinds of churches. They all do some things the same—worship God, help each other, tell people about the good news—but they all do it a little differently.

ASK: How is that like your marshmallow buildings?

EXPLAIN: Remember that God made everything to be different on purpose. Diversity is a precious gift from God.

HAVE A STUDENT READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27.

ASK:

- What role do you play in the body of Christ?
- Do you help others? Do you love to share answers and talk about the Bible? Are you artistic or athletic and able to create movies or games to help us understand God and others better?
- Or ask: Why is it good we are not all the same? Why do you think God made it like this?

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Media player

Watch the [Praises Heard Around the World](#) video:

Have students to reflect on what is the same and different about these churches from their own.

EXPLAIN: I'm glad that church is a place where all different people can worship God.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, we are so grateful for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with everyone, everywhere. We pray that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to live and love like Jesus, helping people who are like us and different from us to feel, know, and be healed by your love. Thank you for the diversity in our church, and churches all around the world. Together, we are one big family that shows and tells the world about your great love. Amen.

Homework

- Memory verse: Acts 1:8
- Do this crossword puzzle: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GCL6Texnmrckp9ZwPsyCiBPTnHdjkEei/>



GOD'S DIVERSE CREATION

MODULE ONE

SESSION 4

In this session we will focus on the marriage feast in Revelation 19:5-9 as God's ultimate goal of bringing all people together in love. Our diversity will not be erased but will be used as it was always intended: to show the goodness, creativity, and splendor of God.

KEY POINT: Diversity demonstrates the goodness, creativity, and splendor of God.

PREPARATION

30 MINUTES

LESSON

30 MINUTES

For your reference, a list of all links are available at covchurch.org/justicejourney/

Session

The Kingdom of Heaven and Diversity

KEY WORDS

DIVERSITY: When God created the world and everything in it, God made things to be different on purpose. God made a variety of animals, plants, and people and called them all good.

ENSLAVE: To take away a person's freedom. Treating a person without dignity or respect like they are a thing you own (like a toy or bike) rather than a person. Making a person do hard work for no pay.

PREJUDICE: Judging someone unfairly without knowing them because they are different. Prejudice keeps us from loving our neighbors and living like Jesus.

RACISM: A sin that leads to believing that one race of people is better or more important than other races of people. It is the opposite of loving our neighbor. Racism spreads like a sickness, messing up relationships, systems, and laws.

SUPPLIES

For this lesson you will need

- Bible (preferably a New International Reader's Version)
- Drawing paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Media player
- Paper bowls, one per child
- Plenty of cheese balls—for playing with and a few for eating! (alternative: cotton balls)

- A tablecloth
- Dishes for place settings, napkins, silverware, a vase of flowers, and small candles
- Paper plates
- Glue sticks and scissors
- Magazines or grocery store flyers
- Picture books from around the world and your local newspapers
- Blank cards
- Stickers

PREPARATION

Review Revelation 7:9-10, 21:1-4, and 22:1-5 for this lesson. Read the passages so you're comfortable with the language. Consider using different voices as you read so that students get a sense of who is speaking during the Revelation songs. You might want to invite a friend with a different speaking voice or accent to help you.

Cue and watch the *There's Space for You* video. youtube.com/watch?v=u3-Px7JqAow

Look through the picture books and have some newspaper or magazine clippings of people who have various jobs, wear different items of clothing, or are eating food.

If you have a community meal, a small group, or a church supper coming up, **be prepared to make invitations** with the students so these can be used to welcome your community to your local version of the great feast!

Print and prepare the homework to pass out to students at the end of class time.

Welcome

SUPPLIES: Drawing paper and markers

As students arrive in your space, greet them warmly and offer them some markers and drawing paper. Ask them to draw pictures of the biggest celebration they have ever been invited to—a wedding or birthday party, or Lunar New Year Festival or quinceañera (a celebration of a girl's 15th birthday, common in Latin American cultures) or bar mitzvah (a Jewish coming-of-age ceremony for boys, marking their transition into adulthood) or Juneteenth (our country's second independence day, when enslaved Black people were freed) celebration.

Spend time with them, asking:

- What was this party celebrating?
- Who was there?
- Who was the guest of honor?
- What did you do? What kinds of foods did you eat?
- What did you wear?

PRAYER

Gather students in a circle for opening prayer. Explain we are entering a special time with God. Encourage children to hold their palms up as a sign we are ready to receive what God shares with us today. You may want to light a candle as a sign that God will show us how to light our way in love when we find ourselves in a dark or difficult place.

PRAY: God, you love each of us and made us all in your image, and different from one another on purpose. Because of your love for us, you offer each of us eternal life through your son Jesus and fill us with your Spirit so we may be guided by you. We look forward to what we will learn from you today and how it will help us to love others in the same way you love us. Amen.

Opening Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper bowls, cheese balls (For communities with health concerns, you may choose to use cotton balls as an alternative in this activity.)

Divide your group into pairs and line the pairs up facing each other, around four feet apart. Put some cheese balls into bowls and hand them to the partners on the left. Give empty bowls to the partners facing them. On "Go," the partners with the empty bowls must hold the bowls in their mouths by biting the rim. The partners with the cheese balls must try to toss them into the empty bowls from their position four feet away. The pair with the most cheese balls in the far bowl wins. Start with new bowls and reverse positions.

EXPLAIN: This would be a terrible way to feed people at a feast! It would be messy, slow, and just plain unfair! What if there were people who couldn't hold a bowl in their mouths, or who couldn't move their arms to toss their partners the snacks? Some people would end up with full bowls and many others would go away hungry. What would be a good way to serve all kinds of people at a big party? Talk with your partner about it.

Discuss a fair way to share resources and honor party guests.

Bible Time

SUPPLIES: A Bible, tablecloth, and table settings

Gather students in your storytelling area. Invite them to listen carefully to the story from the Bible.

EXPLAIN: We've heard about the beginning of history when God created our beautiful and diverse world, and we've talked about the middle of history when Jesus sent out his friends to make disciples from every country and tribe on earth, and that includes us! Now, we'll talk about the end of history!

Remember God started everything by creating the earth and people diverse and good. Then people messed up as sin spread like a sickness. Ever since then, people have been divided by the things that should unite us. Sin is a sickness that destroys what God created for good. Instead of appreciating how God made everyone different, sin

makes some people believe our diversity is a bad thing. We commonly see this through two sins: prejudice and racism.

ASK: Does anyone know what prejudice is?

EXPLAIN: Prejudice is when we judge someone unfairly, without knowing them, because they are different. The difference can be the color of their skin, where they are from, or what language they speak. Prejudice keeps us from loving our neighbors and living like Jesus.

Racism is a sin that is the opposite of loving our neighbor. Racism happens when one group believes it is better than another and they treat others unfairly because of it. Racism is a sin that spreads like a sickness, messing up relationships, systems, and laws.

ASK:

- As a reminder, diversity is the variety and differences that God made in the same type of thing on purpose. What is something diverse that God made that you appreciate?
- Do you think that God would make some people better than others?

EXPLAIN: People have gone to war, killed, and enslaved other humans because they thought the color of their skin made them better than others. Even more than that, people all over the world hurt each other with words and actions because they are afraid of how we are different. Two ways this commonly happens is prejudice and racism. Many people are sad and hurt or angry and hateful because of these two sins.

ASK:

- Do you think God is happy with that situation?
- Do you think God would make us diverse if it was bad?

EXPLAIN: No, I don't think God is happy about that either. God is not part of prejudice or racism at all. God is the one who intentionally made us all to be different in the first place. Diversity was God's own idea!

God sent Jesus to save all people from all places, all over the world. We know that.

ASK: So if that is God's plan, how do prejudice and racism work against what God wants?

EXPLAIN: What you might not know is that God's plan doesn't stop there. At the very end of the Bible, a man named John had a wonderful dream from God and wrote it down. In his dream, John saw what would happen at the end of time when Jesus comes back to earth to show

all people that he loves them and rescues them from sin's power. John saw the big throne room of heaven where God rules as king over all the earth. Here's what he saw.

HAVE A STUDENT READ REVELATION 7:9-10.

ASK:

- What do you hear?
- So, if God begins the Bible with diversity and ends the Bible with diversity, is diversity something God thinks is good and important?

EXPLAIN: In heaven people of all countries and tribes and languages were all worshiping God together. They were wearing the same white clothes that reminded everyone of the way they followed Jesus. The only thing that was different about them was the way God had made them: individual and unique, diverse and special. They expressed unity in their diversity. While they looked and worshiped differently, they were all following Jesus and praising God together. And after that, in **Revelation 19:9**, they were all invited to a feast!

Have students color this picture of Revelation 7:9 as you begin to spread out the tablecloth and set it with the place settings, flowers, and candles: drive.google.com/file/d/1XW0bEw9wy5YMRKJKSb5Y8vtH-jaPxFCm/view

EXPLAIN: My table here isn't big enough for that many people. But do people who are at war or who hate each other or believe that they are superior to others sit down at a big feast together? No. A feast means a celebration with people who love each other! So, at the end of history, people of all countries and skin colors will sit down at a table together, at the same feast.

The most important guest at this feast will be God.

God says that is what it will be like at the end of time. But God also wants us to live this way today.

ASK:

- How might we do something like this?
- Who could we invite to a feast that doesn't look like us and whose traditions are different from ours?
- How could we show God's love to those who are different from us?

HAVE A STUDENT READ REVELATION 21:1-4.

EXPLAIN: God will end all fighting and war; there will be no more death or sadness or pain.

ASK: Do you think there will be things like prejudice or racism there?

EXPLAIN: No, prejudice means to mistreat others because they are different, and racism is a sin. Both of these sinful behaviors hurt people, divide communities, and work against what God wants. These sins spread like viruses messing up our relationships, creating an unkind culture and evil laws. That is not what God wants, and these things will not be present after God heals us and our world.

HAVE A STUDENT READ REVELATION 22:1-5.

EXPLAIN: A garden and rivers? That sounds like creation, like where God made all people in the first place! And, in **verse 2**, we read that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, which also means ethnicities. God will use us, our love, creation, and the gospel to heal the wounds racism and prejudice cause. We will all be one people—God's people. Just as God made us all different in the beginning at creation, God will love and rule over all the different kinds of people as our King at the end of time.

ASK:

- Why do you think God showed John this dream of all people from everywhere worshiping God together?
- Why do you think that God wants to throw a big feast for all God's people? Do you think there are people who would not want to come? Why or why not?

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Paper plates, glue sticks, scissors, grocery store flyers or magazines

Give each student a paper plate and lay out the other supplies. Encourage them to cut out and glue the food pictures on their plate to create their idea of a feast. As they do this, talk about the Bible lesson:

ASK:

- Why do you think having lots of different foods at a feast would be a good idea?
- Who would you like to share a feast with? Why?

When the activity is finished, set the plates aside to dry and guide the group to work together to clean up. Encourage students to share their plates with the class.

EXPLAIN: These feasts all look different!

Application Activity

SUPPLIES: Picture books showing people from all over the world as well as your local newspaper

Look through the books and newspaper with the group. Point out all the people doing, wearing, and eating different things. Play a game similar to "I'm going on a cookout or barbecue at the park."

To begin say, "I'm going to a feast and I'm inviting someone who (name an action, food, or clothing from the pictures)." For example, "I'm going to a feast and I'm inviting someone who eats tortillas." The child next to you must say, "I'm going to a feast and I'm inviting someone who eats tortillas and (their own choice)." Continue this way until either kids start forgetting the previous answers or until everyone has had a couple of turns.

EXPLAIN: Since we know that God has invited everyone from every place on earth to God's great feast, it seems silly to exclude people now.

ASK:

- Would you be whiny and rude to someone who was a guest at your holiday meal?
- How can we be kind to people now and treat everyone with respect, as if we were getting ready to sit down to a feast together?
- What should we do when we see others being treated unfairly or unkindly because of their differences?
- As fellow future guests at the table, how can we stick up for them? How might we celebrate together?
- What might we learn from each other?

Video Activity

SUPPLIES: A media player

Gather students around the video player and play the video [There's a Space for You.](#)

ASK:

- What was most noticeable about the feast?
- Who was there?
- What were they saying?
- Was anyone missing?
- Would you like to go to that kind of a feast?

Closing Activity

SUPPLIES: Blank cards, coloring materials, stickers

Invite students to use these supplies to make invitations to whatever local gathering you've decided on. As they decorate, ask them for ideas of who your church could invite to this feast—such as people they don't normally see at church. Collect these cards and distribute them as you can.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, heal the world from the sins of prejudice and racism. Help us to see everyone as loved by you and equally made in your image. Help us to see all people as our neighbors. Help us to respond to our neighbors who look and act differently than we do with your love, remembering that you made us diverse on purpose and that diversity is a gift to us, the church, and our world. Thank you, God, for making us different on purpose and helping us to celebrate our differences together in your name. Amen.

Homework

- Memory verse: Revelation 7:9
- Color this picture of the heavenly feast: https://drive.google.com/file/d/15TzxVVeCH2mJAXejbaz6R3Zr2RZ9KEU_/
- Color this picture of Revelation 22: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JE94g67zxAICkSjhNAhOafvTHARQ5E9F/>
- Do this vocabulary worksheet: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZRvZPHu92RYvIFOhsfnDrEpigK4N-opu/>

JUSTICE JOURNEY *for kids*

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