

# Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

## Creation





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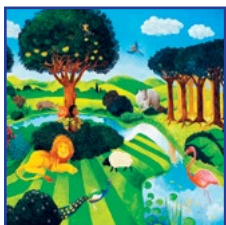
How God Made  
Everything  
*Genesis 1:1–2:4a*

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When the World  
Started Over Again  
*Genesis 6–9*

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We Were All  
Farmers Once  
*Genesis 2:4b–22*

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The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at [www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum) or [www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum). Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

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# Connecting

🌱 **Goal:** To hear the second story of creation and learn how dependent we are on the earth.

### Connecting with the Biblical Text

This is the second story of creation, and it invites children to hear how another writer explained the beginnings of the world. This time we hear from a writer who was more concerned with the connection between humans and the land, the fertile soil of the earth, and less concerned with the daily order of creation and the idea of humans as in charge of and responsible for creation. This writer is referred to as the Yahwist writer because they use the term *Yahweh* for God. This ancient writer wanted the Israelites to remember that this rich, dark soil from which humans were created was the same rich, dark soil that sustained their daily life via food. Rather than being placed in charge, the Yahwist writer wants us to remember that we are dependent on the land. We need to take care of the land so that all living things can thrive. These stories of creation show how two different voices describe beginnings, each one different and each valued by their original audience and by modern hearers of this text.

If you would like to read a short commentary article on this text, go to [bit.ly/Genesis2Commentary](http://bit.ly/Genesis2Commentary). For additional background on this text, read the notes in the *CEB Study Bible* (Common English Bible, 2013).

### Connecting with the World

- 🌱 Are there working farms in your community that you could visit?
- 🌱 Do you know anyone who has a farm or grows vegetables or herbs in their yard? Could you invite them to talk with your children about their connection to the land and food?
- 🌱 Are there opportunities for gleaning? What groups in your community help combat hunger, such as Second Harvest Food Bank (check for local food banks via [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org))

[/find-your-local-foodbank](#)) or the Society of St. Andrew ([www.endhunger.org](http://www.endhunger.org)). They both work to provide food for those in need. What volunteer opportunities are there for your church?

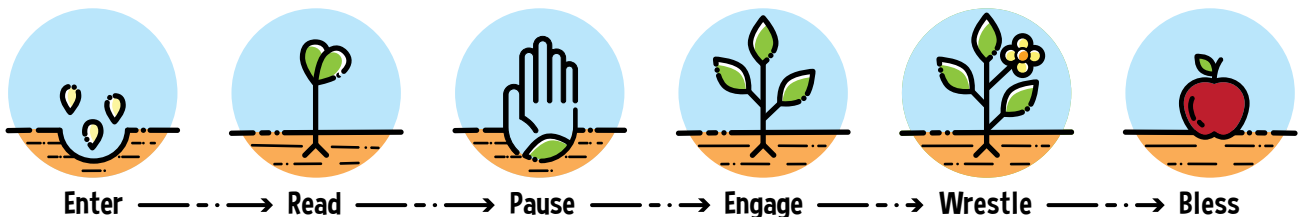
### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

What's more fun for a young child than playing in dirt or a mud puddle? Feeling the texture of dirt and watching earthworms move in and out helping to aerate the soil is a wonderful introduction to God's beautiful land. Going to pick strawberries or blueberries in the summer and apples in the fall or planting and tending a garden is a great family or congregational activity *and* provides a way to connect this story about land and the first farmers to our lives today. "Thank you, God, for giving us so many things we like to eat" is a simple prayer to use with children of any age. Older children can see how our life on this earth also means we can share, in so many ways, with those whose food is not as plentiful. Appreciating the land and all it provides for us and being involved in sharing food with others certainly contribute to a child's spiritual formation.

### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

"We hit the ground running"—a common phrase we use to describe the nature of our lives today. When do you stop and think about the ground you walk on? Perhaps you like to garden in the summer, tending flowers or vegetables or herbs. You notice the richness of the soil or the dryness of the earth, and you learn when to water or feed, when to sow seeds or plants, and when to harvest. Many of us are far removed from the food we eat. How can you become more connected with the rich, dark soil that God created to grow the plants that feed all creation?

*God, we thank you for the land you have provided for us—for our food and for our enjoyment. Help us to remember how much we are dependent on it for our very life. Amen.*



## Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Floor pillows, cushions, or beanbag chairs
- ✓ Cloth or scarf
- ✓ Glass jar or bowl filled with dirt
- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Pot of herbs
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ *Glory to God* hymnal
- ✓ Newspaper or plastic tablecloth
- ✓ Small plastic or terra-cotta pots
- ✓ Potting soil
- ✓ Vegetable or flower seeds or small plants
- ✓ Spoons
- ✓ Various colors of dirt
- ✓ Cups
- ✓ Large sheets of white paper
- ✓ Food coloring
- ✓ Disposable plastic gloves
- ✓ Paint shirts
- ✓ Resource Page 1 for list of soup ingredients and recipe

## Preparing to Lead

Read the story in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 22) and in your Bible. Consider using the Common English Bible. It is a recent translation (2013), and the translator of Genesis in the CEB, Theodore Hiebert, also wrote this story, “We Were All Farmers Once.” As you read, notice how this writer has a different approach to telling the story of creation than the writer of Genesis 1. It’s not ordered and repetitive like the first story written by the priestly writer. The focus of the creation story in Genesis 2 is on the land, “the best, richest, darkest, thickest soil” and the connection humans have with it.

In what ways do you engage with this story?

- ✓ What did this writer want us to know about God and creation?
- ✓ What are the actions of God in this story?
- ✓ How is God’s life breath alive in you?
- ✓ What was the role of humans in this story of creation?

Review the names of the children you will be teaching. Keep their names before you this week, and keep them in your prayers as you prepare to greet them.

Have a gathering space for the beginning of class ready to go, with pillows for the floor, cushions, or beanbag chairs. Have a small table with a cloth or scarf on it. Place the following objects on or around it: candle, glass jar or bowl filled with dirt, some vegetables, and a small pot of herbs.

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For children struggling with transitions, set clear expectations and let them know how long activities should take. Give them a prompt to help them move into the next part of the session.

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### Enter into sacred space together.

Invite children into the seating space and turn the lights off in the room. Tell the children that when the world began, God brought in light, and we do that now to remember how much God loved the world. Turn on the candle.

In the previous session, the children learned the refrain to the song “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying,” available in *Glory to God*, #469 or at [bit.ly/LordListenRefrain](http://bit.ly/LordListenRefrain). You can also choose to listen to the YouTube video “Ken Medema—Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” ([bit.ly/LordListenSong](http://bit.ly/LordListenSong), 4:58). Invite the children to sing along with the song. You will sing this song in each session of this unit.

Invite the children to think about how their experiences with the land, earth, and dark, fertile soil. Wonder together:

- ✓ Where does your food come from? (If necessary, try to follow the food chain back to the earth.)
- ✓ Have you ever grown vegetables, herbs, or flowers? What was that like?

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If your group has children who are part of farming families, wonder together what their experience of farming the land is like.

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### Read a story of God's people.

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It’s easier for some children to listen if they have paper and pencil with them for making notes or even doodling. Provide paper and pencils for those who want to do that while listening to the story.

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## Leading

Since the previous story is connected to this story, invite children to share what they remember of the story “When God Made Everything” (Genesis 1:1–2:4a). Remind the children, if necessary, that the Bible begins with two different stories of creation that were written by two different writers wanting to highlight something that was important to the story. Tell them that in the first story in Genesis, the writer tells us what was created day by day for six days until the seventh day, when God rested. Explain that the story of creation we will hear today is very different. Invite the children to see if they can tell how it’s different and what parts are the same. Read “We Were All Farmers Once” (p. 22).

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Invite children who like to read to help you by taking turns reading a paragraph at a time.

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### Pause to let God’s Word enter into hearts and minds.

Tell the children that sometimes the world we live in gets so noisy that we need just a few minutes of silence. Explain that you will watch the time for two minutes. Invite the children to think about how the dark, fertile soil helps you grow and live.



### Engage curiosity and imagination with God’s story.

Have a conversation with the children about the story.

- ✎ What words did you hear repeated in this story?
- ✎ How is this writer’s story about creation different from the first story of creation? (You may want to reread “How God Made Everything” [p. 20].)
- ✎ Why did God create humans?

Choose one or both options:

#### ○ Farming

- ✎ This story talks a lot about land and farms. Wonder together about the children’s experience with farms.
  - What is a farm like?
  - What do you see, smell, or notice on a farm?
  - Have you ever been to a farmer’s market and talked with the farmers who are there?

- What kinds of food did you buy?
- What did you see, hear, or notice at a farmer’s market?

✎ Watch one or more of these YouTube videos about farming:

- Harvesting Wheat—from ‘ bee bright—Out and About on the Farm—Incredible Crops! ([bit.ly/HarvestingWheat](https://bit.ly/HarvestingWheat), 9:40)
- “Planting & Harvesting Vegetable Crops Video” ([bit.ly/VegetableCrops](https://bit.ly/VegetableCrops), 2:34)
- “A Year on Our Farm” ([bit.ly/AYearOnOurFarm](https://bit.ly/AYearOnOurFarm), 5:42)

✎ Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- In the story “We Were All Farmers Once,” we read how God realized that one farmer can’t do all the work alone. Who is involved in farming in the video(s) we watched?
- In our story today, God said we need to take care of the soil and the farms so that there will be enough food for everyone. How do you think that farmers take care of the soil and their farms?

#### ○ Planting

- ✎ Talk together about what’s involved in planting, tending, and harvesting. Cover a table with newspaper or a plastic tablecloth, or work outdoors, if possible. Provide small plastic or terra-cotta pots, potting soil, spoons, water, and seeds or small plants (flowers or vegetables).
- ✎ Show the children the seeds and plants that you have, and invite them to choose something they would like to plant. Some may want to plant seeds and watch them grow. Others may want to plant a small plant that is already growing. Follow the instructions on the seed packets or plant cards regarding how deep to plant the seeds or plant. Help the children understand how to care for their seeds and plants. Tell the children that they are good gardeners whenever they do what God wants for God’s creation, whether they are tending to their seedlings or helping one another grow in God’s grace.



## Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Read the first three paragraphs of the story again. Wrestle together with the following questions:

- ✔ What are some ways we can be good to the soil?
- ✔ If we could see God's breath today blowing around us, what do you think would happen?
- ✔ What have we learned about farming since this story of creation was written?
- ✔ What can we do to make sure everyone has access to the food that they need to survive?

### ○ Making Soup

- ✔ Wonder together where different vegetables are grown. You may know that some states grow a certain kind of crop and some vegetables come from far away due to growing seasons. Consider together how vegetables get from the place they were grown to your room today. Count up how many people and places may have had a hand in raising those vegetables.
- ✔ Tell the children that you are going to make a simple vegetable soup together while thinking about the food we eat and giving thanks for those who grow it and get it to us. Use a vegetable soup stock as your base. Explain that even though it is in a container, it, too, contains vegetables from the earth. Show the children the vegetables and herbs that you have brought to make the soup. Comment that though some may be in cans (tomatoes and beans), frozen (peas and corn), or dried (herbs), they all were grown by farmers for our benefit.
- ✔ Determine what the children in your group can do: peel and cut carrots, chop onion and garlic; measure frozen vegetables; add ingredients; add seasonings; stir the soup; set the table; and so forth. Use the recipe on Resource Page 1 to make the soup.
- ✔ Serve and enjoy, giving thanks for the goodness of the earth and the farmers who provide for us.



## Bless one another with God's grace.

Have the children move back to the gathering space where you began at the start of this session. Remind the children that the author of this story of creation wanted us to imagine how God breathed God's own breath and created a world and humans and animals and everything we need to live and thrive. Invite children to think about their response to the prompt, "God's breath in me helps me . . ." Begin by turning to the person on your right and saying, "God's spirit is in you." That person responds, "God's breath in me helps me . . ." and completes the sentence. They then turn to the person on their right and blesses them with, "God's spirit is in you." Continue around the circle until everyone has been blessed and had a chance to respond.



## Grow with more.

### ○ Paint with Mud

- ✔ Invite the children to get their hands dirty! Cover a table in newspaper or plastic tablecloths. Have the children put on paint shirts. Show the children the different colors of dirt you have gathered. Invite the children to scoop some of the different types of dirt, each in their own cups, and add water until the dirt forms a thick soupy consistency. They may add a few drops of food coloring, if they desire, and mix it in to the mud. Have them fingerpaint with their mud. When they have finished their paintings, have them title them, "We Are a Part of the Earth." Display the paintings.

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*Some children may not like getting their hands dirty or will dislike the texture of the mud. See if disposable plastic gloves may help, or suggest that they may want to use watercolors or markers to make a picture with dirt and mud colors.*

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## Simple Vegetable Soup

Makes about 7 cups.

Takes about 15–20 minutes

### Supplies:

Large soup pot with lid  
Large microwave-safe bowl  
Large spoon  
Ladle  
Knives

Cutting board  
Measuring cups and spoons  
Stove top  
Small bowls or cups  
Spoons

### Ingredients: (feel free to add or substitute vegetables)

4 cups low or no-sodium vegetable broth	½ tsp salt
1 (28 oz.) can petite diced tomatoes	¼ tsp black pepper
1 Tbsp olive oil	1 (15.5 oz) can white kidney (cannellini) beans
1 cup sliced carrots	1 cup frozen peas
1 cup trimmed and chopped (about 1") green beans (or use frozen)	1 cup frozen corn
1 small onion	½ lemon
1 clove garlic	Fresh or dried basil

### Directions:

1. Pour the vegetable broth and diced tomatoes into the microwave-safe bowl and cook on high for 6 minutes.
2. While the broth and tomatoes are cooking, add oil to a large soup pot and place over medium heat. Add the carrots. Stir and cover.
3. Add the green beans. Stir and cover.
4. Peel and chop the onion. Add to the pot. Stir and cover.
5. Peel and mince the garlic. Add to the pot. Stir and cover.
6. Add salt and pepper. Stir and cover.
7. Drain the white kidney beans. Add to the pot.
8. Add the peas.
9. Add the corn. Stir and cover.
10. Carefully add the hot broth and tomato mixture. Stir and cover. Increase the heat to high.
11. Cook to boil. Reduce heat to simmer. Stir occasionally until the carrots and green beans are tender, about 2–3 minutes.
12. Juice ½ lemon.
13. Remove soup from stove. Stir in lemon juice.
14. Serve. Garnish with fresh basil or sprinkle dried basil over the soup.

