



Approaches to discipleship

Faith conversations

Aim: To create a space for all ages where questions about faith can be aired and responded to.

Please make every effort to make this **all age**. There are plenty of tried-and-tested approaches for exploring Christian basics with just adults, but very few for an inter-generational approach. This is our opportunity to find out if intergenerational discipleship reaches the parts other approaches don't reach.

1 Messy Basics sessions

**Sample (Session 1):
Who is God and what is God like?**

Read Genesis 1:1—2:4.

First thoughts on the story

The opening chapter of the Bible offers us a beautiful God-centred poem about how this world evolved, unpacking the wonders of the universe and of planet earth stage by stage. Each big God-day adds another layer to the story, including both you and me, made in God's image, and the presence of rest. This story from the Bible is telling us that life on earth isn't a chemical accident or some random explosion in space but a planned gift for us all from God, who is love. We are here because God wants us to be here. God's words started everything off!

There is so much to enjoy in this world – light, water, plants and trees, the stars and the moon, the fish and birds, all the animals and people – and the amazing part of this story is that God wants you and me to look after it

and work with him to make the earth a safe home for all. This is an awesome responsibility but one which, sadly, we have not responded to very well. Rather than working with God to protect the land, the oceans and the huge diversity of plant and animal life on this planet, we have acted selfishly, hunting many creatures to extinction, choking the air with greenhouse gases and pouring our plastic waste into the oceans. We must, of course, face up to our part in all this, and the Bible has more to say about that later. Nevertheless, it is clear from this first story that we are each especially loved by God and made to be like him in creativity and compassion.

Suggested visual aid

Use a small globe – either a model desk globe or a blow-up world – as you talk about this story together. Point out the land and the sea; talk about the places where certain animals and sea creatures can be found; name some countries, and also any friends and/or family who live in another part of the world. We call this amazing planet 'earth', but I wonder what other name(s) God might give it?

Talk about the story

- 1 Which 'day' of this creation story is your favourite and why?
- 2 From this story, what can we learn about God? What is God like?
- 3 What can we learn about ourselves? What's so special about you and me?

- 4 How does this Bible story differ from a scientific description of how this world was made?
- 5 Is there anything that puzzles you about this story?
- 6 Why do you think this story is important to Christians?

An activity together

As a group of adults and children, give each other five minutes to search the home for any objects that are somehow linked to the different 'days' of creation – light, water, land and plants, stars and moon, fish and birds, animals and human beings, rest. Arrange them in an ordered line that matches the Bible story and then talk about which parts of creation you like best, which parts are the most important and how we should be looking after the world better, just as God asked us to.

Video suggestions

- Kids explain God and the universe (fun, insightful, American!) – [youtube.com/watch?v=XSODYy5jP_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSODYy5jP_Y)
- Celebration of creation (beautiful images to Christian worship song) – [youtube.com/watch?v=AE_BX1XUSC4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AE_BX1XUSC4)

Highlighted verse

'God looked at what he had done. All of it was very good!' (Genesis 1:31).

A related Bible story

Read Psalm 139:13-18, where the writer is blown away by how special God has made each one of us.

Pray with the story

Turn your conversation and thoughts into thank-you prayers to God for the many beautiful things in the world. As you do so, encourage each other to pick up objects from your creation line (see the activity) and say one-sentence 'Thank you, God, for...' prayers. Depending on what else you may have talked about, you might want to include prayers of saying sorry for how we have not looked after this world and also prayers for help to do better.

Summing it all up

- The universe exists because of the overflow of God's love.
- We are the jewels in God's creation crown.
- Christians believe that planet earth is a gift from God for us to enjoy and to look after.
- We share in God's likeness and were created to be part of God's family.
- Each one is special to God, wanted and loved.

Take away

What difference will this make in your everyday life this month?

Or: How will this connect with your everyday life this month?

For the full set of sessions, see separate document: **Messy Basics**

Material from a different source

For example:

- Messy Lyfe – a family approach to spirituality that could be used as a group: brfonline.org.uk/products/messy-lyfe-living-life-with-jesus
- Family Question Time, Family Jesus Time (if there any interest in developing a group approach around these two mini-books, Lucy can work on this): brfonline.org.uk/products/family-question-time-check-out-the-adventure, brfonline.org.uk/products/family-jesus-time-going-on-the-faith-adventure
- Youth Alpha, Start Course, Emmaus

Use the Islands Map at the end of each session to talk about what treasure people have uncovered on the different islands. Encourage people to reflect and doodle in their Travel Journal at home and bring it to show the group if they want to next time.

It might help to have somebody simply observing and recording significant moments.

Have fun!