

Talkabout God and the First Families

Gather 'Round Weekly page

Fall 2010



Week 1

God creates

Genesis 1–2

Faith focus

God delights in creation.

The Bible opens with two accounts of creation. Through God's creative process, light, life, and order emerged. God blessed and named all parts of creation as good.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Turn off lights and light a candle; then read Genesis 1:1–5.
- Go outside to look at the sky; then read Genesis 1:6–8.
- Read Genesis 1:11–13; then eat a fruit to find some seeds.
- Find out what phase the moon is tonight (Genesis 1:14–19).
- Name as many kinds of birds as you can think of (Genesis 1:20–23).
- Read Genesis 1:27 then pass a mirror to look at people made in God's image. Or take a picture of everyone together and put it on your computer screen.
- Did you know? The Tigris and Euphrates rivers of the garden of Eden flow southeast from the mountains of Turkey through Iraq.

Prayers for this week

God of new beginnings, give us—faith, hope, and love.

Great God, we share your delight in all you have created.

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Week 2

In the garden

Genesis 3

Faith focus

Our choices matter to God.

Both Eve and Adam ate forbidden fruit. God visited them and called them to account. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. God sent them out of the garden.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 3:6–8.
- Walk quietly around your yard together as an evening prayer.
- Have one person hide. The rest of the family will find the hidden person by asking, “Where are you?” and listening for the whispered, “Here.”
- Tell some good rules to follow.
- Tell about a perfect time or place you wish you could go back to.
- Tell about a time you blamed someone else for a bad choice you made.
- Adam and Eve used them for clothes. They sometimes reduce the amount of insulin needed by diabetics. What are they?

(Fig leaves.)

Prayers for this week

Thank you, God, that you come looking for us when we are alone and afraid.

God of hope, we choose to follow you.

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Week 3

The flood

Genesis 6:5–9:17

Faith focus

God's promise is to all creation.

God was deeply disappointed in humankind and decided to destroy the creatures on earth. God chose to save Noah's family and representatives of all the creatures.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 8:1–2 together.
- Look at a picture book about the flood such as *Noah's Ark* by Peter Spier (Trumpet Club, 1989).
- Noah stood out as a righteous person. Name someone you know who chooses to do what is kind and good.
- Pretend to be the raven and dove in Genesis 8:6–12. Take turns being sent out by "Noah."
- Noah's family and the animals were safe inside the ark. Tell about a place that makes you feel safe.
- Arrange rainbow-colored candies in an arc shape. Memorize Genesis 9:13. Eat some candies every time you repeat the verse.
- What does "Roy G. Biv" help you remember?

(The order of rainbow colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.)

Prayers for this week

God, may the light of your love shine through the disasters in our lives.

God of rainbows and promises, help us to care for the world you made.

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Week 4

The tower of Babel

Genesis 11:1-9

Faith focus

Work together for God's purposes.

People misused their speech and skills to create a tower that was a monument to their pride. God confounded their language and scattered them, creating diversity.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 11:3-4. Thump your chest as you say the people's words to show how proud they were.
- What do people say to show they are better than others? What are some words that build up kindness?
- Share any words you know in another language or sing a song in another language.
- Work together to build a layer cake to share with someone who is lonely.
- Look around outside to find something built by an animal. Name some animals that work together to build shelters.
- Tell about a time you worked with others to build something such as a snowman, a sandcastle, a house, or a swing set.
- In Genesis 11, people left their home area because they couldn't understand each other's languages. What language is spoken by the most people in the world?

(Mandarin Chinese.)

Prayers for this week

God, may our words and actions build a more loving world.

God of all people, your love reaches around the world.

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Week 5

Abram, Sarai, and Lot

Genesis 12–13

Faith focus

We go out in faith.

At God's command, Abram and Sarai traveled to a new land with Abram's nephew Lot. After strife between their herders, Abram and Lot separated peacefully.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 12:1–2.
- Abram built altars to worship God. Place stones around a candle as each person tells the best blessing of the day.
- As your family heads off for the day, say, “May God bless you and make you a blessing to others.”
- It took courage for Abram and Sarai to move far from home. Tell about the hardest thing you needed to do today.
- Abram and Sarai built an altar near the oaks of Mamre. Pray quietly under a nearby oak tree.
- Abram and Lot's workers quarreled over grazing land. What do you sometimes quarrel about?
- Did you know? The oaks of Mamre lay near an important trade route. After the time of Abraham, it became the site of an important summer trade fair.

Prayers for this week

God, we want to follow your way and do your work each day.

Thank you, God, that you journey with us wherever we go.

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Week 6

The births of Ishmael and Isaac

Genesis 16:1–17:22; 18:1–15; 21:1–7

Faith focus

Look for God's blessing.

Sarai urged Abram to bear children through Hagar, and Ishmael was born. God changed Abram and Sarai's names to Abraham and Sarah, and promised them their son, Isaac.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 17:15–18.
- Talk about each child's birth or adoption. Describe the joy and laughter that accompanied the event.
- Abraham prayed, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight." Talk about your hopes and prayers for each other.
- Spread a blanket to represent a tent and eat a simple meal there. Say a blessing for people who grew, harvested, and prepared the food.
- Abraham and Sarah's new names had special meanings. Talk about the meaning of each person's name.
- Hold a new baby or baby animal. Say kind words of blessing for the baby.
- How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?

(One hundred.)

Prayers for this week

God, open our eyes to the blessings that surround us each day.

God, you know us and love us. Thank you for _____ (name each family member).

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Week 7

Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis 21:8–21

Faith focus

God hears our cries.

Jealousy caused Sarah to have Hagar and Ishmael sent away. An angel came to Hagar as she and Ishmael wandered in the wilderness and said that God was with them.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 21:17–19.
- Hagar and Ishmael became very thirsty. Eat a salty food and then take a big drink of water.
- God heard Hagar and Ishmael's cries. Tell about a time when you cried out for God's help.
- Share stories about a sad sound you have heard. Or sing a sad song.
- Donate money to an organization that helps provide clean drinking water around the world.
- Everyone needs clean, safe water. Talk about ways to use water wisely.
- Women still search for water. What is the average distance that women in Asia and Africa walk to collect water?

(Four miles / six kilometers.)

Prayers for this week

God, hear our cries when we are in trouble.

God, help us reach out to people who are suffering.

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Week 8

Jacob and Esau fight

Genesis 25:29–34; 27:1–28:9

Faith focus

Selfishness separates God's family.

Jacob and Esau were brothers. Jacob tricked Esau into selling his birthright for a bowl of stew. Jacob later stole Esau's blessing by coming before their father dressed as Esau.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 25:29–30.
- Selfishness separates families, but many actions unite us. What makes you feel connected to your family?
- Make lentil stew as Jacob did. While cooking together, name both selfish and unselfish actions.
- Read a version of the traditional story, "Stone Soup." What good can come from sharing?
- Tell about a time when saying goodbye made you sad.
- Jacob and Esau didn't get along. Use two magnets to show their relationship.
- The red stew Jacob cooked was likely red lentils. Lentils are an excellent source of what nutrient?

(Protein.)

Prayers for this week

Thank you, God, for placing us in families.

May God, creator of heaven and earth, bless you.

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Week 9

Jacob and Esau reconcile

Genesis 32:1–33:17

Faith focus

Younger: We can make peace.

Older: Seek forgiveness.
Extend grace.



Jacob sent a present to his estranged brother, Esau. The two arranged to meet, and Esau rushed forward to embrace his brother. The two reconciled and parted in peace.

Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 33:1–4.
- Jacob gave a gift to Esau. Draw a picture or write a note and give it as a gift to someone in your family.
- Esau surprised Jacob with forgiveness and friendship. Tell about a time someone forgave you.
- Look into a mirror with someone in your family. Show how Jacob and Esau looked when they met.
- Find out how to say peace in another language. Pray for peace around the world.
- Tell about someone who is like a brother or sister to you even though they are not in your family.
- What is the biggest present you have gotten? Jacob sent a really big present. How many animals did he give (Genesis 32:14–15)?

(580.)

Prayers for this week

God of love, heal our hurt feelings; mend our hearts.

God, may we see you today in the loving faces of our family.

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Week 10

Jacob's family

Genesis 37

Faith focus

Our attitudes and actions affect relationships.

Jacob gave his son Joseph a special robe. Joseph's brothers were jealous of this and other things. They threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery in Egypt.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 37:3–4.
- The brothers hurt Joseph because they were jealous and angry. Talk about peaceful ways to handle angry feelings.
- Read a story about actions and consequences such as *Because a Little Bug Went Ka-choo!* by Rosetta Stone (Random House Children's Books, 1975) or *The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle (HarperCollins, 1996).
- Jacob was brokenhearted when the brothers brought Joseph's bloody robe to him. When have you been sad or worried about someone in your family?
- Braid three strands of colorful yarn into a short rope. Unbraid it as you name actions or attitudes that do harm.
- Jacob lavished attention on one particular son. Mention a special trait of each family member.
- Did you know? Joseph went to Egypt by camel. A camel's long eyelashes and third eyelid make it possible for the camel to continue walking in a desert sandstorm.

Prayers for this week

God, help us to not do any harm when we are angry.

God of peace, thank you that you love each of us especially well.

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Week 11

Joseph in Egypt

Genesis 39–41

Faith focus

God helps us to be wise leaders.

Joseph was imprisoned and then released to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph said Pharaoh's dream was about a coming famine. Pharaoh made Joseph second in command.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 39:2–4.
- Joseph, favored son of Jacob, was a slave, a prisoner, and finally an Egyptian ruler. What does it mean to be successful?
- Joseph dreamed and interpreted dreams. Tell about a dream you have had.
- Joseph became a wise leader. Think of another wise leader. Give clues until others guess the name.
- Joseph got many new responsibilities throughout life. What new family job would you like to do?
- The grain Joseph stored provided food for hungry people. Pick items from your cupboard to give to a local food pantry.
- Pharaoh's dream cows came up out of the Nile. Look at a map of Africa. What tributaries feed the Nile?

(The White Nile, Blue Nile, and the Atbara River in East Africa.)

Prayers for this week

God of wisdom, show us the way to live.

God, thank you that you are with us in good times and bad.

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Week 12

Reuniting the family of Jacob

Genesis 42–46

Faith focus

God is at work.

Joseph was a ruler in Egypt. His brothers came to Egypt to buy food during the famine. Joseph finally revealed his identity and was reconciled with his family.



Choose from the following ideas:

- Read Genesis 45:4–8.
- Pass seeds to remember that God's work is sometimes hidden like the life inside the seed. In time we see growth and change.
- Jacob's family was reunited after 20 years. Tell about meeting someone you had not seen for a long time.
- Make an "I'm sorry" card to give to someone with whom you had a quarrel.
- Jacob's family needed grain. Point out foods on the table or in your cupboard that are made from grain.
- Joseph decided not to seek revenge. Tell about a time you decided against getting even.
- How many of Jacob's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren moved to Egypt?

(Sixty-six.)

Prayers for this week

God, help us forgive instead of trying to get even.

God, your love brings us back even when we have done wrong.

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