

Living the Word:

Teaching Youth God's Story

Narrative Lectionary, Year 3

The First Promise

Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17, 3:1-8

Lesson #3-1

September 11, 2016



Spirit and Truth Publishing
www.SpiritAndTruthPublishing.com

Writers

Gloria Allhiser
Brett Carter
Nance Keyes
Kari Osmek
Beth Priest

Editors

Cynthia Fairman Paulson
Rev. Dr. Daphne Burt

Curriculum Design

Rev. Sarah Nye

Layout

Nance Keyes

Publisher

Gregory Rawn

Illustrator

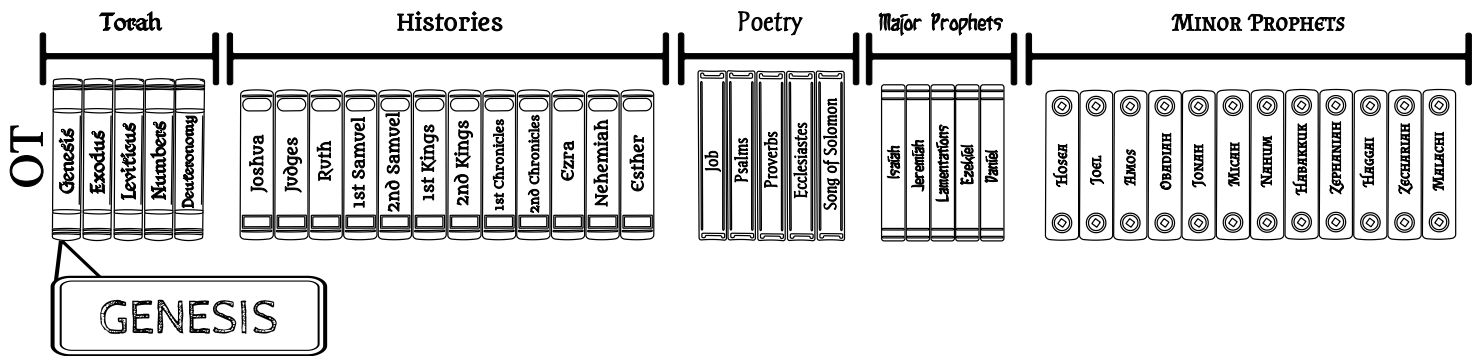
Rev. Tom Pairan

Copyrights

Living the Word: Teaching Youth God's Story (Narrative Lectionary, Year 3)
Text and illustration copyright 2015-2016 by Spirit and Truth Publishing

All rights reserved. Please see the End Users Licensing Agreement (<http://spiritandtruthpublishing.com/policies/eula/>) for details as to permissible reproduction of these curriculum materials. No part of this curriculum may be used or reproduced in any other manner whatsoever without written permission. For information, contact Spirit and Truth Publishing at www.SpiritAndTruthPublishing.com.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is quoted from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



The First Promise

Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17, 3:1-8

Today we start at the very beginning! God makes the world and the first humans, and from the very beginning, provides what we need.

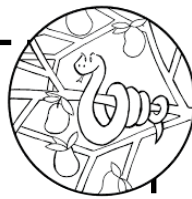
Story Connections

Consider today's reading from Genesis 2 in light of Genesis 1. They both tell the creation story, but in Genesis 2 the writer helps us to see that the God who made everything is Israel's God.

Story Summary

The First Promise

Today we hear the story of creation, focusing especially on God's creation of the first humans. God breathes life into them and provides all that they need. God gives them all the trees of the garden to eat from but one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God calls them into fellowship, which they can enjoy by obeying by God's voice and fulfilling their calling as keepers of the garden.



Lesson @ A Glance

#3-1: The First Promise
Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17, 3:1-8

The Point: Even though our God promises to provide for us and to take care of us, we have wandered and followed other, untrustworthy, voices.

Making Connections: Promises Made, Promises Broken

Spiritual Practice Emphasis:
Fellowship

Bible Nuts and Bolts: What is the Bible?

Sadly, the humans choose not to follow God's direction. They listen to a serpent who persuades them to do what God told them not to. As soon as they disobey, their relationship with God has been broken. Instead of "fearing" God (respecting God, the "fear" that leads to wisdom) the first people are now living in an unhealthy fear that God never intended. If we continue to read beyond the verses in today's reading,

we see that humanity's relationship with the earth also became broken as a result of their disobedience.

The Point

Even though our God promises to provide for us and to take care of us, we have wandered and followed other, untrustworthy, voices. The first humans are given all they need to thrive in relationship with God and the world. This makes their wandering from God all the harder, but it feels familiar because we too have wandered from God's voice and all that God intends for us.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:8

Bible Nuts & Bolts: What is the Bible?

The Bible is a collection of stories, histories, and poems, written by many hands over a long period of time. It is the story of God's love and relationship with all of creation throughout history and through many experiences.

For Your Reflection:

Are there times in your life when you have been tempted to listen to a voice that you know is not God's? How can we discern God's voice from other voices?

2. What are some things that youth find distracting as they try to focus attention on God's voice?

3. What are practices you can point them to that will help them to listen and obey God's voice?

Spiritual Practice: Service

In this week's lesson we learn about the beginning of God's fellowship with humanity. God treasures relationship and created us for it, but we easily break fellowship with God and with each other, and need the restoration God offers.

Overview, Objectives, and Materials You'll Need

Core Elements

Into the Story

5 min.

Have Some Fruit

Enjoy different fruits, but one kind is off limits.

- › Several kinds of cut up fruit
- › Bowls
- › Spoons
- › Napkins
- › Optional: small “off-limits” sign

+Learning the Story 15-20 min.

Sounds and Voices

Notice sounds and voices in today’s passages to invite reflection on who we listen to.

- › Bibles
- › Colored pencils

+Living the Story 20 min.

Listening for the Picture

Follow directions to draw a picture.

- › Photographs of things in creation
- › Paper
- › Pens or pencils

+Sending the Story 5 min.

- › None

Short on time?
Items marked +
can be adjusted to be done with
what you probably already
have in your pocket or
classroom.

Extending the Learning:

Hands On

20 min.

Creation Scavenger Hunt

Look for objects that show God's creativity and human responses.

- › List of objects to search for
- › Small notebooks and pencils
- › Optional: cellphones or digital camera

Mixed Media

10 min.

The Earth is Yours

Listen to a worship song to celebrate that the earth belongs to the Lord.

- › Internet-connected device
- › Optional: percussive instruments

The Competitive Edge

20 min.

Making Up the Rules

Discover how hard a game can be when the rules are not clear.

- › Scrabble or other common board games

Simply Serving

10-15 min.

Planting Seeds

Plant herb seeds to practice earth-keeping and relationship-building.

- › Small pots,
- › Potting soil
- › Spoons
- › Packet of herb seeds (preferably sage)

+Worship Connection

15 min.

Rejoicing in the Goodness of Creation

Invite the congregation to worship the Creator.

- › Bibles or hymnals

Into the Story: Have Some Fruit (5 minutes)

Enjoy different fruits, but one kind is off limits.

DURING CLASS:

1. Set up several small bowls of cut-up fruit. Choose a few kinds for variety. Clearly label one of the bowls “off-limits,” or be prepared to let the youth know when they arrive that they can enjoy any of the fruits they wish to sample except for that one kind.

Supplies:

- › Several kinds of cut-up fruit
- › Bowls, spoons, napkins
- › Optional: Small “off-limits” sign

DURING CLASS:

1. Invite the youth to enjoy the fruit, but make sure they clearly know which fruit they cannot sample.
2. After everyone has had a chance to enjoy some of the fruit, ask: **How did it make you feel that you could not have this one kind of fruit? Did you find that rule easy or difficult to follow?**
3. Let each youth briefly share their reaction or response.
4. **Today we are going to read and reflect on a passage from Scripture where the very first man and woman were provided with a whole garden of trees to enjoy, but were told that one tree was off limits.**

Learning the Story:

Sounds and Voices (15-20 minutes)

Notice sounds and voices in today's passages to invite reflection on who we listen to.

DURING CLASS:

1. Pass out Bibles.
2. **Today's story is from the first book of the Bible, Genesis. We will be reading about the creation of the world and of the first humans. We will also be reading about how the first humans responded to God.**
3. Invite the youth to read the passages silently at first, using colored pencils to mark the passages in this manner: with one color, they will mark places where they can imagine sounds in the story. With another color, they will mark the different voices that speak in Genesis 2:15-17 and in Genesis 3:1-5. They can circle God's words, underline the snake's words with a slithery kind of line, and put a box around the woman's words.
4. **Now we are going to read today's passages again, this time aloud. We are going to act the scene together as though it were a movie, emphasizing the voices and sounds.** Assign some youth to read the voice roles (narrator, God, woman, serpent), and have others provide sound effects where appropriate. They can work together to decide where sounds might be appropriate. Some suggestions if they need them include: rain, stream, God's breath, snake slithering, God walking, evening breeze, leaves rustling as they hide.
5. **Who do the woman and man listen to in the passage? [God, the serpent] How did the serpent approach the woman and how did his words differ from what God told them? [He questioned what God had told them, he contradicted what God had said about the consequence of eating.] Why do you think that the woman and man listened to the serpent instead of God?**
6. **We have all had times when we have been swayed by voices that tell us things that do not agree with what God has told us. What are some ways we can help each other listen to and obey God's voice?**

Supplies:

- › Bibles
- › Colored pencils

Living the Story:

Listening for the Picture (20 minutes)

Follow directions to draw a picture.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Look for pictures of unusual or beautiful things in creation. These should be interesting things but not too difficult to describe. Try nature or science magazines and websites or use old calendar photos.

Supplies:

- › Photographs of things in creation
- › Paper
- › Pens or pencils

DURING CLASS:

1. Divide youth into pairs. If there is an odd number, be their partner. One youth should have a photograph that they do not show to their partner and the other should have paper and a pen or pencil. Let them sit back to back on the floor or in comfortable chairs.
2. **Today you are going to have a chance to draw a picture. Your partner will try to describe the picture without telling you directly what it is. They will give you directions for drawing it. Listen carefully and try to follow the directions as carefully as you can.**
TIP: Encourage the youth giving directions to be as clear as they can be. They can describe general shapes of things, sizes, where certain lines or shapes should fall on the page, colors, etc.
3. Give youth about five minutes to work on their picture. At the end of the time, let the youth with the picture show the other what the original photo looks like.
4. Time permitting, let the partners switch roles and try it again using another photo. This will give each youth a chance to give the directions as well as draw.
5. **How close was your drawing to the original? Sometimes we follow directions well, but sometimes it can be hard, even when we think we are listening carefully! When the first humans decided not to follow God's directions, God's original vision for the world was changed. God gave clear directions because God wanted people to live in loving fellowship with God and with the world, but that fellowship was broken and it changed the whole picture. In the next weeks, we will be talking about God's promises to God's people to make a way to restore that fellowship.**

Hands On: Creation Scavenger Hunt (20 minutes)

Look for objects that show God's creativity and human responses.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Ideally this should be an outdoor activity, so decide before class what the parameters of the scavenger hunt will be (how far the youth can go from the church building). Create a list of 10-12 objects that the youth can look for, etc.

Ideally, the list should feature some natural things that show the beauty of creation as well as some things that show human response: either faithful and creative responses or responses that reflect the brokenness of the world.

Supplies:

- › List of objects to search for
- › Small notebooks and pencils
- › Optional: cellphones or digital cameras

TIP: Ideas for bits of creation might include sticks, stones, leaves, or a particular kind of flower. You could also see how creative the youth can be by giving them a list that asks them to look for something round, textured, or a certain color. Objects that feature human response might include signs, architectural features, trashcans or recycling bins, something thrown away that could be reused, recycled, or repurposed. You know your own area best and the scavenger hunt will be shaped differently in rural, suburban, or urban areas.

DURING CLASS:

1. **Today we are going on a scavenger hunt. We are on the lookout for objects that remind us of God's creativity and human responses to that creativity.**
2. Divide youth into two teams. Provide them with the list of things they are looking for. Make sure that one person has a small notebook and pencil where they can note down what they find. If they find more than one thing that matches the object description (for instance, you might list "something green") they can write down more than one thing.
3. Alternatively, they can also take pictures of the things they find to show when they return.
4. Provide a time limit by which the teams need to check back in. The team that has found the most objects in the allotted time wins .

Mixed Media: *The Earth is Yours* (10 minutes)

Listen to a worship song to celebrate that the earth belongs to the Lord.

DURING CLASS:

1. Invite youth to listen to and watch Gungor's song "*The Earth is Yours*." It can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kG4SKwTG9_k
2. This particular version has clearly written lyrics and creative graphics, so it is worth watching as well as listening to. Have youth listen and watch once through, then invite them to join in singing or dancing with it, celebrating that the earth belongs to the Lord.
3. The song is percussive. Ask youth to join in with makeshift percussive instruments (rocks, sticks, shells, etc.) or actual percussive instruments, such as tambourines or drums, that your church might have.

Supplies

- › Internet connected device
- › Optional: percussive instruments

The Competitive Edge:

Making Up the Rules (20 minutes)

Discover how hard a game can be when the rules are not clear.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Choose a board game that is common enough that youth might be familiar with it, such as Scrabble or Bananagrams. Come up with a few variant rules for the game. These do not have to make a lot of sense. They can be things like “if you build a word less than four letters, you have to skip your next turn” or “anyone wearing blue gets to double their score when they play a letter with an ‘a’ in it.” You will know these tweaks to the rules, but the youth will not.

Supplies:

› Scrabble or other common board games

DURING CLASS:

1. Invite youth to play the game. Set the basic ground rules quickly but let them know that there will be some tweaks to the rules that they will not know about until the game is underway.
2. Begin play and let the mayhem start by imposing the consequences of the new rules without telling youth what those rules are! See if youth can guess the rule changes once they have been applied a few times.
3. The game should be fun but it should also help youth to think about the gift of clear rules and standards. You might want to emphasize that point and connect it to today’s lesson.

Simply Serving:

Planting Seeds (10-15 minutes)

A six-week experience to help area youth who are homeless or food-insecure.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Set up a work area where youth can plant seeds in small pots. Since you are working with potting soil, an outdoor area might be best if weather permits. Otherwise, set out some newspaper to make clean up easier.

Supplies

- › Small pots
- › Potting soil
- › Spoons
- › Packet of herb seeds (preferably sage)

DURING CLASS:

1. **In our lesson today, we learned how God called the first humans to tend and keep the garden. Today we will plant seeds to remember our vocation to be stewards of creation. We will also be giving these pots of herb seeds away to older members of the congregation to help us remember our call to live in fellowship with others.**
2. Give each youth a small pot and spoon. Have them fill their pot with soil and then plant 2-3 small seeds in the pot.
3. If you are able to get sage seeds, point out the play on words. “Sage” is a common herb, but “sage” can also be used as a description of someone who is very wise and experienced. The people they will be giving the herbs too are, in a sense, “sages,” people whose wisdom and experience they can value and learn from.
4. This might also be a good time to tell them about the play on word with Adam’s name in today’s passage. **“Adam,” the word for the first human being, is a play on the Hebrew word “adamah” which means ground. By using the name Adam, the writer of Genesis was showing us how deeply connected the first human being was with the earth.**

Worship Connection:

Rejoicing in the Goodness of Creation (15 minutes)

Invite the congregation to worship the Creator.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Arrange for a time after the main worship service when youth can invite congregants into a brief time of youth-led worship. This opportunity could be announced at the close of service so people leaving could join youth at a designated place outside, weather permitting, or inside if the weather is inclement. If your congregation is having a homecoming service for the beginning of fall, there might already be an outdoor activity scheduled which you could build on.

Supplies

- › Bibles
- › Hymnals

DURING CLASS:

1. **Today we are going to invite the congregation to a brief time of worship following the main service. This will be a special time of worship where we focus on God as our Creator.**
2. Encourage the youth to find at least one Scripture verse that focuses on rejoicing in creation. This should be a verse that can be read aloud as the “call to worship.” Encourage them to use the indexes in the back of their Bibles. You might suggest that each youth (or partnered youth) look up different passages, and then the group can decide together which ones to read aloud for the congregation. Some suggested Scripture verses include: Genesis 2:15, Job 12:7-10, Psalm 19:1-6, Psalm 24:1-2, Psalm 148, Isaiah 42:9-10.
3. Encourage youth to select a hymn about creation that they can lead the congregation in singing. Possible choices might be: “*All Things Bright and Beautiful*,” “*All Creatures of our God and King*,” “*Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*,” “*For the Beauty of the Earth*,” or “*How Great Thou Art*.” Alternatively, if youth learned Gungor’s “*The Earth is Yours*” during the extended activities, they might choose to teach the congregation that song !

Sending the Story (5 minutes)

There is both abundant good news and very hard news in our lesson today. We have focused on the wonders of creation and all the many ways that God provides for us, but we have also thought about ways in which we fail to serve God and the creation when we wander away from God's voice. Thinking about these things can lead us to thanksgiving and confession.

What are some of the ways God provided for the first human beings? *[Food, a place to live, beauty, fellowship, and a calling. God also gives them instruction, which the first humans decide not to follow although God is clear about the consequences.]* **How did the first humans respond unfaithfully?** *[They turned their backs on what God had told them, listened to a voice that was not God's, listened to lies/deception about God and themselves, hid from God when God came to find them, turned in the wrong direction.]*

Invite youth to join hands in a circle. **We are going to pray around the circle twice. The first time through, let's thank God for all that God has provided. You can share your thanksgiving aloud or pray it silently. If you pray silently, make sure you squeeze the next person's hand so they know when you are done. The second time around, we are going to tell God we are sorry for times when we have walked away from God's voice. You can share your confession aloud or silently.**

At the end of the second time around the circle, close with a brief prayer of gratefulness for all that God provides through what God has made, and for the forgiveness God extends to us through Jesus.

Remember to send "The Story @ Home" take home sheet with students before dismissing them.

The First Promise

The Story @ Home + Youth #3-1

Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17, 3:1-8



The Point

Even though our God promises to provide for us and to take care of us, we have wandered and followed other, untrustworthy voices. Today's story is important because it shows how God created the world and the first human beings. It reminds us that God has continually called us into fellowship with the earth, each other, and God, and that God continues to provide what we need even when we choose to walk away from God's voice .

Story Connections

We can see how the story in Genesis 2 connects to the story in Genesis 1. Although these creation stories are told slightly differently, in both we see God's provision and care.

Story Summary

The First Promise

Today's story focuses on the creation of the heavens and earth and the creation of the first humans. God breathes life into them. God gives them all the trees to eat from but one, the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil. God calls them into fellowship, which they can enjoy by obeying by God's voice and fulfilling their calling as keepers of the garden. The first humans are created to serve and fellowship with God, but sadly, they choose not to follow God's direction. They listen to the voice of a serpent that distorts what God told them. The snake persuades them to do what God told them not to. As soon as they disobey, the man and woman realize they are naked. Feeling ashamed, they cover themselves with fig leaves. Then they try to hide from God's presence when God comes looking for them.

Spiritual Practice: Fellowship

This week's spiritual practice of fellowship seems especially appropriate since we have been learning about the ways God called people into community with each other, the earth, and God. From the very beginning, fellowship was important. This week keep a blessing jar on the table at home and write down things you are thankful for about the fellowship your family shares.

Last Week/Next Week

There was no story last week – we are at the very beginning of our journey! This week, we learned about God's provision and care for the very first human beings, and about the way they wandered from God. Next week, we will focus in on promises God made to Abram, setting a plan in motion to help restore the broken relationship between human beings and God.

Bible Nuts and Bolts: *What is the Bible?*

The Bible is a collection of stories, histories, and poems, written by many hands over a long period of time. Although the Bible speaks to each of us differently, depending on our contexts and experiences, it is fundamentally the story of God's love and relationship with all of creation throughout history and through many experiences.

The First Promise

The Story @ Home + Youth #3-1

Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17, 3:1-8

Going Deeper

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? Consider the following basic pattern as a way of forming family devotions:

- ✠ Light a candle to help you focus this time as "God time." Pray a simple prayer together.
- ✠ Take a moment to check in with each other; what are each person's "highs" and "lows" today?
- ✠ Read aloud from the Daily Bible Readings from below. Discuss the questions following each.
- ✠ End with a blessing, by simply tracing a cross on each other's forehead. The Lord's Prayer is a good way to end your devotion time. If you used a candle, extinguish it as a sign of the end of the devotions.

Note: This is only a suggested pattern. It will vary with your household's context and patterns. What works best for you? First thing in the morning? Over breakfast? Bed time? Be creative and flexible with how you practice and keep your devotions!

Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday - Read Genesis 2:4b - 7,
15-17, 3:1-8**

Despite the loving relationship God creates the first humans for, they disobey the one rule God gave them.

- How do you think God feels when the humans disobeyed?
- What does it feel like when you know you are doing something you shouldn't do?

Monday- Read Genesis 3:9-19

This reading picks up where our lesson left off, showing the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience.

- What relationships were affected as a result of the man and the woman's disobedience?
- Where do you see a promise or a hope in the midst of the consequences God shares with them?

Tuesday- Read Genesis 6: 9-22

God makes a covenant with Noah and gives him directions for building the ark.

- Why did God decide to send a flood? And why did God choose Noah to build the ark?
- What kind of response did Noah make to God's directions and to God's promise of a covenant?

**Wednesday- Read Genesis 7:17-24,
8:6-12**

The floods come, but Noah and his family and all the animals are safe on the ark.

- How do you think Noah and his family felt as the days went by during the flood?
- Why did Noah send out the raven and the dove? How do you think he felt when the dove came back with the olive leaf?

Thursday- Read Genesis 9:8-17

God establishes a covenant and provides a sign of that covenant.

- Exactly who does God make the covenant with in these verses?
- Why do you think God provided such a clear and recurring sign of the covenant?

Friday- Read Genesis 11:1-9

The people try to build a tower to reach the heavens.

- Why does God respond in the way God does to the building of the tower of Babel?
- Is there a New Testament parallel to this story? (Hint: it shows a reversal of language confusion. See Acts 2!)

Saturday- Read Genesis 12:1-7

God calls Abram.

- What does God ask Abram to do in these verses, and what does God promise him?
- How would you characterize Abram's response?