

CHILDREN

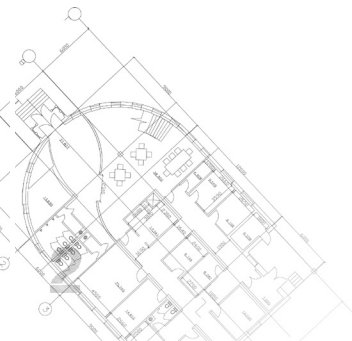
And God Said



SERIES BIG IDEA

The implications of Creation need to be considered by all of mankind.

- Lesson 3.1 The Creative and Eternal Word*
- Lesson 3.2 Awakening to the Wonder*
- Lesson 3.3 God's Concern for the Details*
- Lesson 3.4 The God Who Isn't There*





And God Said: Let There Be . . .

BLUEPRINT

SERIES BIG IDEA

The implications of creation need to be considered by all of humanity.

SERIES MEMORY PASSAGE

Revelation 4:11

LESSON BIG IDEA

The Word of God is central to life.

BIBLICAL PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-3

STUDENTS WILL identify God as Creator and will draw conclusions on the importance of reading His Word every day.

Early Elementary (Grades 1-3)

TOOL BOX

FOUNDATION

- PowerPoint 3.1
- Lego blocks (several per student)

FRAME

- Series 3 memory verse poster (TRP)
- Purple and yellow streamers cut into two-foot pieces (1 per student)
- One copy of the memory verse (TRP) per student and crayons or markers
- Series song and lyrics: "And God Said"
- Glow sticks (1 per student and teacher)
- Bottles of bubbles (1 per student)
- Props: Box of tissues, 2 homemade scrolls, large pen, scissors, and a fireplace (optional)

FINISH

- Activity papers, crayons, and scissors

SELAH

Late Elementary (Grades 4-6)

TOOL BOX

FOUNDATION

- PowerPoint 3.1
- Whiteboard and marker

FRAME

- Series 3 memory verse poster (TRP)
- Container (box or bowl) containing strips of paper with several words of memory verse written on each
- Whiteboard with various colored dry erase markers and eraser
- Instant Freeze instructions: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEWQRJ49CPo
- Bottles of water, big bowl, rock salt, ice, and thermometer
- Paper (2 sheets per student) with pencils and/or crayons
- Series song and lyrics: "And God Said"
- Props: Box of tissues, 2 homemade scrolls, large pen, scissors, and a fireplace (optional)
- Bibles

FINISH

- Activity papers, crayons, and pencils

SELAH

FOUNDATION

Early Elementary (1-3)

Late Elementary (4-6)

Mr. Roboto

Ask a student to come forward to be the perfect robot. Have student stand before the class and remain perfectly still. Explain to the class that this robot has been designed to do exactly as it is told by voice command.

Have fun with this. Start basic by having your new robot walk, raise its arms, or turn its head. Then begin to make the commands more challenging. Depending on the difficulty level, you will probably start to experience some resistance, non-compliance, or possibly unsatisfactory results.

- **Why couldn't this new robot simply do what I asked, exactly as I commanded?**
- **Since we are not robots, what makes it difficult for us to act out commands of others the way they desire?**

Today we will learn how this is never the case with God. When He speaks something to come into existence or for something to happen, it does exactly as He says, because there is mighty power in His word!


Lego Robots

Guided Practice/Reflection

Give several Legos to each student. Give students three to five minutes to create their own version of a robot.

- **How did it feel to create something?**
- **How do you think God felt when He created man? Why?**

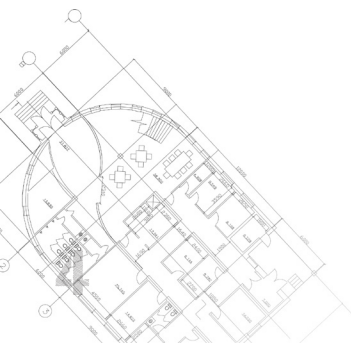
Creation Reflection

Write these verses on the whiteboard or show the PowerPoint :

- "Thy word is true from the beginning" (Psalm 119:160),
- "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Read them aloud together.

- **When God creates something, how do you think He does it?**
- **Why do you think when God says something it always happens?**
- **When we build something, sometimes we make mistakes. Do you think God ever made any mistakes in His creation? Explain.**




FRAME

Early Elementary (1-3)

Late Elementary (4-6)

Memory Verse: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

Praising with the Memory Verse



Display the memory verse (TRP) . Read the verse several times with the students.

Divide students into four groups. Assign each group a different part of the verse and give them streamers.

- 1: “Thou art worthy, O Lord;
- 2: to receive glory and honour and power;
- 3: for thou hast created all things;
- 4: and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Each group should stand and wave their streamers when they say their portion of the verse. Instruct students to say the verse with enthusiasm as worship unto God.

Decorating the Memory Verse

Give each student a copy of the memory verse (TRP) . Encourage students to think of things that God’s spoken word created: plants, animals, planets, and space. Have students use crayons or markers to draw pictures of God’s creation to decorate the verse. Play the series song, “And God Said”  as students draw.

Biblical Passage: Genesis 1:1-3

Read the Bible passage to the class.

Glowing Lights

Give each student a glow stick; keep one for yourself. Turn off the lights. Read the biblical passage again to the class. Tell students to break their sticks and shake them when you say the word “light.”

Just as these glow sticks began to shine when you bent them, when God spoke words, changes started to happen. When God speaks, creation happens.

Creating Bubbles

Give each student a bottle of bubbles.

These bubbles don’t take form until someone blows into them. The world didn’t take form until God spoke His creative words.

Allow students to blow bubbles for a few minutes in celebration of our creative God.

Memory Verse Strips

Before class, write portions of the memory verse on strips of paper. Fold them and place them in a container. On a whiteboard, write each different section you have on the papers in different colors for distinction.

First have the class read the entire verse together a couple of times.

Then have volunteers come to the front to draw a paper out of the container. Ask them to declare which section they think they will pull out of the container before choosing one. If correct, the section of the verse can remain on the board, but if wrong, the section of the verse on the paper selected must be erased from the board.

After each attempt, discard the chosen paper, have the child recite the verse, and then have the class recite the verse as well.

Repeat this until all the papers have been chosen.

Note: For a longer version of the activity, write only one word on each paper.

Reflection

- **Can you think of something you created for fun? It may have been a puzzle, a drawing, or maybe a really cool Lego building. Why did you want to create it?**
- **Was it possibly because you wanted to enjoy the finished work and you wanted others to enjoy the finished work as well?**

Have students think about the memory verse and compare their reasons for creating something with possible reasons why God would have created our entire world and universe.

Late Elementary (4-6)

Biblical Passage: *Genesis 1:1-3*

Read the Bible passage or ask volunteers to read it.

Instant Freeze

Before class, watch the “Instant Freeze” video by Sick Science #226 on *YouTube*. Prepare several bottles of water as instructed. Practice the experiment at home first.

Supplies:

- Bottled water (several bottles)
- Big bowl
- Ice
- Rock salt
- Thermometer

Instructions:

Place water bottles and ice in the big bowl. Add a generous amount of rock salt all around, inside the bowl.

Insert the thermometer into the bowl; wait until the thermometer reaches -8 Celsius.

Carefully pull out a water bottle and strike it against the table. The liquid will immediately freeze from the top down; really cool!


When God created the world and universe, they were formless and in a state of darkness, but when He spoke, it changed everything! His words changed the state of things! It changed the darkness to light. Just as if I were to say to this water bottle, “Be Frozen!” (Pull out the water bottle and slam it down to begin the freeze process.)


God’s very words bring creation and change! In an instant of His speaking, God creates!

Explain to students that you really don’t have the same power in your words as God does. Explain how the water turned to ice. With the other prepared water bottles, call on volunteers to change the water into ice, just as you did.

Drawing Creation


Give two blank sheets of paper to each student, along with colored pencils and/or crayons. Ask students to draw what they think everything looked like before creation when it was formless and dark.

On the other sheet of paper, have them draw what they think everything looked like after God began to speak. Students can refer to *Genesis 1:1-3*. 

Play the series song, “And God Said” , as students draw.

Early Elementary (1-3)

Bible Lesson: *Jeremiah and Baruch (Jeremiah 36)*

Show “God’s Word is forever” slide. 

- **Has anyone ever written a book report that was actually eaten by your dog, or you lost it, or it was on a computer and the file was lost?**
- **How did you feel or would you feel if you had to rewrite your words all over again?**

Choose five students to act, as you tell the narrative. Characters include: *Jeremiah, Baruch, two princes, and the king. Have them act out the story as if they were in a silent film, making no noise. If possible, give a copy of the narrative to the performers before class and have them rehearse. Use a box of tissues, two scrolls, large pen, scissors, and fireplace (optional) as props.*

The Book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament is about the prophet Jeremiah. It tells the words, visions, and dreams God gave him to speak to the nation of Israel. God would often speak words to a prophet to share with the people. We read an account in the Book of Jeremiah when God had given a word to Jeremiah to be declared to the people. However, for some reason, Jeremiah was unable to take the word.

Late Elementary (4-6)

Sometimes Jeremiah would hear a word when he was praying or perhaps in a dream when he was sleeping. The Bible tells us he couldn’t take the Word because he was “shut up.” Some people think this means he was locked in prison by the king, or he was sick. Others think he was banned from going where God wanted him to go to declare the Word of the Lord.

Since we don’t know for sure, let’s pretend that Jeremiah was sick in bed. (*Have Jeremiah act sick and have Baruch sit by him with a box of tissues.*)

Jeremiah motioned to his friend Baruch to write the words God gave him. Baruch began to record the words on a scroll (*give a homemade scroll and a large pen to the child acting as Baruch; he should act like he is recording every word of Jeremiah as he silently mouths words*) and he wrote them exactly as they were spoken from the mouth of Jeremiah.

Baruch wrote on the scroll words of warning to the king and all the nation of Israel. God was telling them that judgment would come upon them if they didn’t change their evil ways and begin to live for God again.

Early Elementary (1-3)

Baruch took the scroll and went to the Temple on a fasting day, when there would be a lot of people there. In a loud voice he read the Word of the Lord from the scroll. *(Have the child portraying Baruch stand in front of the class with the scroll open as if he is prepared to read the words, mouthing them silently but as if he is shouting like a preacher.)*

When the princes of the kingdom heard this, it intrigued them greatly. In fact, they were quite concerned with what they heard. These two princes called Baruch to read it to them privately. *(Call two princes that request to have Baruch re-read the scroll.)* Baruch's warnings scared the princes! Trembling with looks of terror on their faces, they told Baruch and Jeremiah to hide, and they took the scroll to the king. *(Baruch and Jeremiah can sit down.)*

When the princes delivered the scroll to the king, they found the king sitting by the palace fireplace, watching the flames. The king took the scroll, leaned back in his golden chair, and began to read it.

Shortly into the reading, the king took a knife, began to cut the scroll into pieces, and threw it into the fire so that it was consumed completely! *(The king should take a pair of scissors and cut the scroll,*

Late Elementary (4-6)

throw the pieces into a pretend fireplace.) The king did not want to hear these words of warning!

As difficult as they were to hear, these words were from God. God wanted the king and the nation to repent. The king did not care because he didn't want to change.

Oh no! All Baruch's work writing the words of God that were spoken through the prophet Jeremiah were destroyed. *(Call Jeremiah and Baruch actors back again to repeat the first scene.)* The king destroyed the scroll, but he could not destroy the Word of God. If God speaks, it will happen. In fact, God moved upon Jeremiah to speak again the same words to Baruch to write them again in a scroll just as before. In time, even though the first scroll was destroyed in the fire, the Word of God still came to pass.

If God says something, it is forever true. If there are words in the Bible that speak to us to change or to do certain things, simply ignoring them will not make them go away. You can hide your Bible, or sell it, or even throw it away, but those words will always be there waiting for you to listen to them and to do what they say. The words God speaks, and spoke to others to write down, are forever true!

The B-I-B-L-E

Students stand and sing "The B-I-B-L-E."

Reflection

Gather students into small groups, giving each group a Bible. Give groups five minutes to discuss and share with each other why the Word of God is important. After the discussion, have each group share their findings with the class.

Discussion Questions:

- **Why do you think anyone would be afraid of God's words?**
- **If God delivered words to you, similar to how the king of Israel received the words, how would you react?**
- **What are different ways we hear the Word of God today?**
- ☆ **Have you ever read the Bible or heard preaching and knew God was speaking to you? If so, when and what was it?**
- ☆ **Do you read your Bible every day? If not, what keeps you from reading God's Word?**

FINISH

Early Elementary (1-3)

Activity Paper: *God's Word*

Ask students to color the pictures of Baruch writing down Jeremiah's words. Discuss why Baruch needed to write down Jeremiah's words twice.

Then students should color the picture of the Bible and the bookmark. Help them cut out the bookmark to use in their Bibles.

Late Elementary (4-6)

Activity Paper: *God's Word*

Ask students to color the pictures of Baruch writing down Jeremiah's words. Discuss why Baruch needed to write down Jeremiah's words twice.

Then at the bottom, ask students to select a passage from the Bible and write it on the scroll.


Family Connection

Review the family activity, discussing which chapter in the Bible students might choose.

Point out the activity: unscrambling the books of the Bible. If your class has consistent attendance, consider offering a reward for those who return the activity next week.

SELAH

Prayer

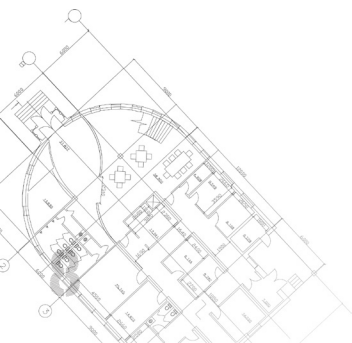
Pray with the students. 

Lord Jesus, we ask You to help us to understand the importance of Your Word. We ask You to guide us to fear and respect Your Word. Please lead our lives in a manner that would develop a strong desire to learn Your Word and to follow it all the days of our lives!

Reflection

Read Matthew 21:18-22 . Give students three to five minutes to reflect.

- **Why should we believe when we pray?**
- **How is the Word of God powerful in this passage of Scripture?**



YOUTH

And God Said

A series by Jeremy Painter



SERIES BIG IDEA

The implications of Creation need to be considered by all of mankind.

- Lesson 3.1 The Creative and Eternal Word*
- Lesson 3.2 Awakening to the Wonder*
- Lesson 3.3 God's Concern for the Details*
- Lesson 3.4 The God Who Isn't There*

And God Said

The Creative and Eternal Word

BLUEPRINT

SERIES BIG IDEA

The implications of Creation need to be considered by all of humanity.

LESSON BIG IDEA

In revealing that God's Word created the universe, Genesis indicates how central the Word of God was and continues to be in Creation.

LEARNING TARGET

To understand the importance of the Word of God in relation to Creation.

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-26

SUPPLIES

Play-Doh or clay, pens, paper, and coloring utensils

FOUNDATION

The old man was on his way to the village that sat at the foot of the highlands. He walked beside his horse, whistling in his characteristically musical manner. Traveling through the country, from burg to burg, he came bringing stories—hence his name, Lügenbold, or, in English, “Storyteller.” No one could tell a story like Lügenbold. The village treated his coming like a holiday: the mayor would declare a feast, the shops would stay open late to supply treats for the revelers, and the fathers would decorate Great Hall where the villagers would gather to hear the old man tell his tales.

Report reached the ears of the village children that Lügenbold was coming, and he was even now making his way through the forest that lay on the village marches. The children ran to the forest and escorted him into town with shouts of joy. Their sound could only mean one thing to the adults: Lügenbold was here. The celebration began.

That night the villagers entered Great Hall and the men lit the giant fireplace to keep out the winter's cold. The women lined tables with meats, cheeses, ciders, and strudels, and a fiddler played the “Roger de Coverley.” After everyone had eaten, the crowd was hushed, and the great old man rose, took up his lute, plucked a minor chord, and began his tale.

“Long before your fathers' fathers were born, up in these same mountains,” he said, as he pointed outside, “there was a mysterious house near the peaks. The house's only inhabitant was a young boy. It was rumored in this very village that his mother had died just before she could pronounce his name, and so he was raised nameless by wolves. But, in truth, no one really knew who the boy was, or if there ever was any boy. The rumor began as many rumors do: with strange reports from visitors and frightened conversations around the dinner table.”

Lügenbold paused and picked the lute strings again, this time slowly. And as he proceeded to unwind his tale, the darkness outside ceased to exist for his listeners. The walls of Great Hall disappeared, the bygone world he described came back to life, and they stood in that world—a world entirely made of the old man's words. His tales became more real to

LESSON BIG IDEA: Creativity and Eternality

the listeners than the wooden floor beneath them. Their lives suddenly grew larger, as their present now stretched back to include the past. Only the occasional popping ember from the giant fireplace penetrated the world of sound that came from his old, leathery voice.

Opening Discussion:


- How would you define the word of God?
- What is the importance of the spoken word in relation to Creation?

Middle-School Exercise:

1. Provide your students with various colors of Play-Doh or clay.
2. Instruct students to simply create something with what they have been given.
3. After a few minutes of shaping, allow students to explain what they created and why.
4. Explain how this mirrors the undertaking that God took part in. He formed countless things, both living and not, all with the purpose of glorifying Him.

Senior-High Exercise:

1. Provide students with clay, pens, paper, and coloring utensils.
2. Instruct students to simply create something using any or all of the items at their disposal.
3. Give three to five minutes for students to complete their creations.
4. Allow students to explain what they have created and why.
5. Explain how this mirrors the undertaking that God took part in. He formed countless things, both living and not, all with the purpose of glorifying Him.
6. All things that we create are beautiful as they reflect our Creator and His ultimate work of Creation.

 *Have one or two of your students share an experience involving God's written Word. This may be a ministry opportunity, a revelation moment, or a time when God's Word was used to evangelize another person. Share one of your own stories if you feel led.*

FRAME





I. Called into Existence

- A. God, the original Storyteller, by His word, called a world that did not exist into existence.
 1. This train of thought leads us to a meditation upon the meaning of Genesis chapter one.
 2. Our ability to create fictional worlds with our words, that impact the real world, is an echo of the ability of God, in whose image we are made.
- B. Storytellers, by the power of their words, bring that which is not into existence.

 *Why is it difficult for some to believe God created the world?*

II. Creativity and Inspiration

- A. **The Creativity of the Word**  

1. According to Genesis 1 and John 1, everything we see today, the moon, stars, sun, trees, mountains, oceans, clouds, animals, and human beings, was solely made by the word of God.
 2. In Genesis 1, each day of Creation begins with, “And God said, Let there be”
 3. Outside of Judeo-Christian tradition, creation stories typically tell of how the gods created the universe by accident, through procreation, or out of the gods’ body parts.
 4. The notion that the world was made merely by the spoken word of God is quite unusual and speaks to the creative power of the word of Israel’s God.
 5. Perhaps our ability to create fictional stories with our words is one of the many ways we get to exercise God’s image in us.
- B. More important, the fact that the world was made by the word of God indicates how central His word was and continues to be in Creation.
1. The prophets and apostles of our faith continually emphasized the word of God.
 2. Truth is not defined even by one’s present circumstances.
 3. God’s word is the measure of truth.
 4. Moses went so far as to say that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God. (See Deuteronomy 8:3.)  And, above all, the apostle John refers to Jesus of Nazareth, God’s supreme self-expression, as the “Word . . . made flesh” (John 1:14.) 
- C. **If God’s word created the world, and if God’s word upholds the world, and if God’s eternal Word will outlast the world, how central should His Word be to our lives today?**  

1. To live outside the principles of God’s Word is to live out of sync with the very foundation of the universe.
2. To live in accordance with His Word is to live by a principle so creative and powerful that it burst forth into the light on the first day of Creation and continues to be the binding force that holds the universe together.
3. Far from being restrictive and limiting, the Word of God actually liberates and creates just as it did in Creation.
4. As God’s spoken, creative word reverberated, carving out the space that would be called the “universe,” the divine utterance blazed into a cosmos full of diversity and wonder.
5. Abraham’s life was nondescript and would have ended unknown, but then Abraham heard and obeyed God’s word. Moses was destined to be just another Egyptian prince among the thousands and thousands of long forgotten princes, but then on the mountainside he heard God’s word. The single difference between an Eli, whose promising religious career ended in ignominy, and a Samuel, whose distinguished career included the founding of the Davidic dynasty—the most storied and longest-lasting dynasty human history has ever seen—came down to just one thing: Samuel heard what Eli could not—the word of the Lord.



How do we make sure the Word of God stays central to our lives?





What do you personally need to do to make God’s Word more a part of your life?



This would be an excellent time for a personal testimony. Alternatively, consider asking ahead of time for a volunteer in the class to share his or her story.

III. Doubt’s Attack on the Word

- A. **The Integrity of the Word**  
1. It was not long after God had finished creating the world with His word that God’s enemy, the serpent, began a campaign against the integrity of that word.

LESSON BIG IDEA: Creativity and Eternality

B. The serpent's attack was aimed at God's word, the heart and soul of Creation.

1. Satan's temptation was as subtle as it was effective.
2. Adam had already discovered that no creature had been created with the power of speech.
3. He was entirely alone in the world.
4. And this may be one reason why the serpent's temptation was so effective.
5. Eve must have been shocked to hear the serpent speak, and then the serpent was telling her that God had only kept her from this powerful tree in order to keep her from climbing to a higher rung of being. Why shouldn't she believe him?

C. Satan's disguise as a serpent was intentionally chosen to place doubt in Eve's mind regarding the fruit of the forbidden tree.

1. He targeted God's word when he said, "Hath God said . . . ?" Not only was this an attack on God's word, but it was also a direct attack on Creation.
2. By placing in doubt the integrity of the God's word, Satan was also attempting to reverse the process of Creation: "And God said" became "Has God said?" Indeed, because Eve fell for the deception, the life of Creation reversed course and death entered into the world.
3. So how did God reclaim what was lost after this attack upon His word?
4. The Word now redeems humanity and takes up residence, in the form of the Spirit, and recreates us from the inside out.

FINISH

As the weather turned cold one year, the Lord spoke to Jeremiah, telling him all that would happen to Israel's southern kingdom, Judah, if the king and people didn't change their ways immediately. (See Jeremiah 36.) The prophet remembered the words of God and dictated them to his scribe Baruch, who wrote them down on a scroll. Because Jeremiah was not allowed to go to the Temple, he asked Baruch to go to the Temple during a day of fasting and read the Word of the Lord to the people, in hope that they would repent.

Doing as he was told, Baruch went up to the Temple's new gate and read the contents of the scroll. When he finished, the people were troubled, especially members of King Zedekiah's court. These men asked Baruch if these were indeed the words of Jeremiah. Baruch affirmed that they were. Knowing Zedekiah would interpret the scroll as a personal threat, the men pleaded with Baruch to go secretly with Jeremiah into hiding. One of the men, Jehudi, took the scroll to the king's winter palace and read it aloud to him.

The king sat wrapped up in front of a fireplace. As light and shadow from the fire danced on the ceiling above, Zedekiah listened carefully. Though he knew the king would not take the prophecy well—few kings ever did or do—the king's response still must've surprised Jehudi somewhat. Every time he read three or four columns of the scroll, Zedekiah reached over with his knife, cut what Jehudi had just read from the scroll, crinkled it up in his fist, threw it angrily into the fire, and watched with strange satisfaction as it burned.

The Lord informed Jeremiah of what had happened with the prophecies, so Jeremiah had the words written down again, along with a few added words, presumably the curse God issued upon Zedekiah and his descendants for trying to consign God's Word to the fire.

What's ironic about this story is the fact that while the impressive Temple in which Baruch read the scroll is gone, the king's beautiful winter palace is gone, and even the great imperial Babylon, which threatened Judah at this time, is long gone, words committed to the very flimsiest of materials—scroll paper—are still with us today.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is the Word of God disregarded by some?
- Why must we never disregard God's Word?

Middle-School Finish:

1. Ask students about personal creations they have made through the years, whether paintings, poems, building projects, or so forth.
2. Why do these creations mean so much to us?
3. When we pour ourselves into something, it takes on a whole new value.
4. God poured Himself into the Creation of the world, using His very words to form the universe into what we know today.
5. He loves His creation and hopes we will love it as much as He does while also glorifying Him for the beauty He has crafted.

Senior-High Finish:


1. What is something you have created and are proud of?
2. Ask your students the same and allow them to explain the importance of the things that we personally create.
3. Why do we value these things so much?
4. What is their importance to us?
5. Why do we want others to appreciate our creations like we do?
6. Discuss why God would likewise want us to appreciate His creation as much as He does.

The Big Picture

- God's word was central in creating the universe.
- The Word is still necessary and integral in creation and the existence of all things today.

Final Reflections

- What are some other ways—besides creating stories—that we exercise God's image in us?
- What does it mean to be subtle?
- How is Satan's subtlety seen in our world today?
- Why is doubt such a powerful tool of the enemy?

 *Allow students time to share what they have written.*

SELAH

Using the following points, take this time to guide your students in prayer.

- Jesus, thank You for Your creation and all the beauty that is contained in it.
- Thank You for Your Word and all that it has done in changing my life. Speak to me and through me by Your Word.
- Protect me from all temptation and deception.
- Chase away all doubt and leave me with nothing but the truth in You.

 *Allow time for students to update their Personal Discipleship Guide.*

ADULT

And God Said

A series by Jeremy Painter



SERIES BIG IDEA

The implications of Creation need to be considered by all of mankind.

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And God Said:

The Creative and Eternal Word

A series by Jeremy Painter

Lesson Big Idea: In revealing that God's word created the universe, Genesis indicates how central the word of God was and continues to be in Creation.

Foundation

Scripture Focus: Genesis 1:1-26

Tell the story of Lügenbold (the Storyteller) on page 88.

Frame

A. God, the original Storyteller, by His word, called a world that did not exist into existence.

» *Why is it difficult for some to believe God created the world?* ⚙️

B. The **Creativity** of the Word

1. Perhaps our ability to create fictional stories with our words is one of the many ways we get to exercise God's image in us.

» *What are some other ways—besides creating stories—that we exercise God's image in us?* ⚙️

» John 1:14

2. If God's word created the world, and if God's word upholds the world, and if God's Word will outlast the world, how **central** should His Word be to our lives today?

» *How do we make sure the Word of God stays central to our lives?* ⚙️

» *What do you personally need to do to make God's Word more a part of your life?* ⚙️

C. The **Integrity** of the Word

1. The serpent's attack was aimed at God's word, the **heart** and **soul** of Creation.

» *What does it mean to be subtle?* ⚙️

» *How is Satan's subtlety seen in our world today?* ⚙️

2. Satan's disguise as a serpent was intentionally chosen to place doubt in Eve's mind regarding the fruit of the forbidden tree.

» *Why is doubt such a powerful tool of the enemy?* ⚙️

Finish

Tell the story of Jeremiah and King Zedekiah on page 91.

- » 1 Kings 5:1-10
- » *Why is the Word of God disregarded by some?* ⚙️
- » *Why must we never disregard God's Word?* ⚙️

Foundation

Scripture Focus: Genesis 1:1-26 

The old man was on his way to the village that sat at the foot of the highlands. He walked beside his horse, whistling in his characteristically musical manner. Traveling through the country, from burg to burg, he came bringing stories—hence his name, Lügenbold, or, in English, “Storyteller.” No one could tell a story like Lügenbold. The village treated his coming like a holiday: the mayor would declare a feast, the shops would stay open late to supply treats for the revelers, and the fathers would decorate Great Hall where the villagers would gather to hear the old man tell his tales.

Report reached the ears of the village children that Lügenbold was coming, and he was even now making his way through the forest that lay on the village marches. The children ran to the forest and escorted him into town with shouts of joy. Their sound could only mean one thing to the adults: Lügenbold was here. The celebration began.

That night the villagers entered Great Hall and the men lit the giant fireplace to keep out the winter’s cold. The women lined tables with meats, cheeses, ciders, and strudels, and a fiddler played the “Roger de Coverley.” After everyone had eaten, the crowd was hushed, and the great old man rose, took up his lute, plucked a minor chord, and began his tale.

“Long before your fathers’ fathers were born, up in these same mountains,” he said, as he pointed outside, “there was a mysterious house near the peaks. The house’s only inhabitant was a young boy. It was rumored in this very village that his mother had died just before she could pronounce his name, and so he was raised nameless by wolves. But, in truth, no one really knew who the boy was, or if there ever was any boy. The rumor began as many rumors do: with strange reports from visitors and frightened conversations around the dinner table.”

Lügenbold paused and picked the lute strings again, this time slowly. And as he proceeded to unwind his tale, the darkness outside, for his listeners, ceased to exist. The walls of Great Hall disappeared, the bygone world he described came back to life, and they stood in that world—a world entirely made of the old man’s words. His tales became more real to the listeners than the wooden floor beneath them. Their lives suddenly grew larger, as their present now stretched back to include the past. Only the occasional popping ember from the giant fireplace penetrated the world of sound that came from his old, leathery voice.

Frame

I am sure you yourself have experienced what this village felt when they heard Lügenbold’s stories. Whenever we hear someone tell a story (and especially if they tell it well), something in our minds lends so much reality to the storyteller’s words that we will laugh at (or with) his character, weep over the character’s pain, or feel the character’s fear, hope, or faith. A character’s loss becomes our loss; a character’s victory becomes our victory. But when we step back from the story, we might wonder why fiction—a world made entirely of words—was able to produce an effect in reality. In other words, though stories are the sum and substance of this fictional world, they have a certain reality. Storytellers, by the power of their words, bring that which is not into existence.

This train of thought leads us to a meditation upon the meaning of Genesis chapter one. For our ability to create fictional worlds with our words that impact the real world is an echo of the ability of God, in whose image we are made. Once, before there was such a thing as time, **God, the original Storyteller, by His word, called a world that did not exist into existence.**

 **Why is it difficult for some to believe God created the world?**


The Creativity of the Word



According to Genesis 1 and John 1, everything we see today, the moon, stars, sun, trees, mountains, oceans, clouds, animals, and human beings, were solely made by the word of God. In Genesis 1, each day of Creation begins with, “And God said, Let there be . . .”

As familiar as this might sound to us who have grown up in the Christian era, we should not take the centrality of God’s word in Creation for granted. Outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, creation stories typically tell of how the gods created the universe by accident, through procreation, or out of the gods’ body parts. The notion that the world was made merely by the word of God is quite unusual and speaks to the creative power of the word of Israel’s God.

Perhaps our ability to create fictional stories with our words is one of the many ways we get to exercise God’s image in us. But more importantly, the fact that the world was made by the word of God indicates how central His word was and continues to be in Creation.

What are some other ways—besides creating stories—that we exercise God’s image in us?

The prophets and apostles of our faith continually emphasized the word of God. Not only is there the constant refrain of Genesis 1, “And God said,” but throughout Scripture, God’s people continually circle back to the word. For God’s people, truth is defined not by the ruling class of a powerful nation; kings and empires come and go. Truth is not defined even by one’s present circumstances. God’s word is the measure of truth. When Israel went astray, one of God’s prophets would jump-start Israel’s reclamation with, “Thus saith the Lord . . .” God’s word raises kings and destroys tyrants; it is the sole defense of the righteous, and a terror to the wicked. Moses went so far as to say that mankind does not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God. (See Deuteronomy 8:3.) And, above all, the apostle John refers to Jesus of Nazareth, God’s supreme self-expression, as the Word made flesh. (See John 1:14.) 

If God’s word created the world, and if God’s word upholds the world, and if God’s eternal Word will outlast the world, how central should His Word be to our lives today?   To live outside the principles of God’s Word is to live out of sync with the very foundation of the universe. To live in accordance with His Word is to live by a principle so creative and powerful that it burst forth into the light on the first day of Creation and continues to be the binding force that holds the universe together. Far from being restrictive and limiting, the Word of God actually liberates and creates just as it did in Creation. As God’s spoken, creative word reverberated, carving out the space that would be called the “universe,” the divine utterance blazed into a world full of diversity and wonder. Galaxies formed. Oceans, in their mysterious marriage with the moon, swept over the earth. Giant whales leaped from wave to wave. Forests perfumed the land and became home to an array of creatures, many of which have yet to be discovered. The creative possibilities that are bound up in the word of God are endless.

Abraham’s life was nondescript and would have ended unknown, but then Abraham heard and obeyed God’s word. Moses was destined to be just another Egyptian prince among the thousands and thousands of long forgotten princes, but then on the mountainside he heard God’s word. The single difference between an Eli, whose promising religious career ended in ignominy, and a Samuel, whose distinguished career included the founding of the Davidic dynasty—the most storied and longest-lasting dynasty human history has ever seen—came down to just one thing: Samuel heard what Eli could not—the word of the Lord.

How do we make sure the Word of God stays central to our lives?

LESSON BIG IDEA: In revealing that God's word created the universe, Genesis indicates how central the word of God was and continues to be in Creation.

⚙️ **What do you personally need to do to make God's Word more a part of your life?**

The Integrity of the Word ✍️ 📖

It was not long after God had finished creating the world with His word that God's enemy, the serpent, began a campaign against the integrity of that word. **The serpent's attack was aimed at God's word, the heart and soul of Creation.** ✍️ 📖 Satan's temptation was as subtle as it was effective.

⚙️ **What does it mean to be subtle?**

⚙️ **How is Satan's subtlety seen in our world today?**

Adam had already discovered that no creature had been created with the power of speech. As the animals paraded before him, he realized he had no one to talk to. He was entirely alone in the world. He had already gotten to know a species he had called "serpent." Whatever serpents looked like before mankind's fall, Adam had already discovered that even serpents were incapable of speech. This may be one reason why the serpent's temptation of Eve was so effective.

Eve also would have known from Adam that none of the animals had the power of speech. So when the serpent, from his perch in or around the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, began to speak to Eve, the subtle message was that he had somehow risen to a higher created status. In fact, he had acquired the gift of speech and was therefore on the same level as the human being. In other words, although God had made him an animal, he had, by some mysterious means, become equal with man.

Eve must have been shocked to hear the serpent speak, and then the serpent was telling her that God had only kept her from this powerful tree in order to keep her from climbing to a higher rung of being. Why should she not believe him? After all, the serpent appeared to be a living testimony to the truth of his words. He could talk. He had become a higher being precisely because he himself had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. And if Eve would eat of this tree too, she would move up higher and become like God. If a beast could become like a human, why could not a human become like God?

Satan's disguise as a serpent was intentionally chosen to place doubt in Eve's mind regarding the fruit of the forbidden tree. He targeted God's word when he said: "Hath God said . . . ?" Not only was this an attack on God's word, but it was also a direct attack on Creation. By placing in doubt the integrity of the God's word, Satan was also attempting to reverse the process of Creation: "And God said" became "Has God said?" Indeed, because Eve fell for the deception, the life of Creation reversed course, and death entered into the world.

⚙️ **Why is doubt such a powerful tool of the enemy?**

So how did God reclaim what was lost after this attack upon His word? This question leads us back to the emphasis upon God's word throughout the Scriptures. By His word, God called Abraham. And Abraham's family was marked by its faith in God's word. Moses brought God's written Word down from Sinai, and Israel, like Creation in Genesis 1, became a nation founded and created by God's Word. But the work of God's Word was not complete. Finally, the Word of God Himself became a man, Jesus Christ. The word of God is not merely an impersonal sound. It is God Himself. The Word then

redeems humanity and takes up residence, in the form of the Spirit, and recreates humanity from the inside out.

Finish

As the weather turned cold one year, the Lord spoke to Jeremiah, telling him all that would happen to Israel's southern kingdom, Judah, if the king and people didn't change their ways immediately. (See Jeremiah 36.) The prophet remembered the words of God and dictated them to his scribe Baruch, who wrote them down on a scroll. Because Jeremiah was not allowed to go to the Temple, he asked Baruch to go to the Temple during a day of fasting and read the Word of the Lord to the people, in hope they would repent.


Doing as he was told, Baruch went up to the Temple's new gate and read the contents of the scroll. When he finished, the people were troubled, especially members of King Zedekiah's court. These men asked Baruch if these were indeed the words of Jeremiah. Baruch affirmed that they were. Knowing Zedekiah would interpret the scroll as a personal threat, the men pleaded with Baruch to go secretly with Jeremiah into hiding. One of the men, Jehudi, took the scroll to the king's winter palace and read it aloud to him.

The king sat wrapped up in front of a fireplace. As light and shadow from the fire danced on the ceiling above, Zedekiah listened carefully. Though he knew the king would not take the prophecy well—few kings ever did or do—the king's response still must have surprised Jehudi somewhat. Every time he read three or four columns of the scroll, Zedekiah reached over with his knife, cut what Jehudi had just read from the scroll, crinkled it up in his fist, threw it angrily into the fire, and watched with strange satisfaction as it burned.

The Lord informed Jeremiah of what had happened with the prophecies, so Jeremiah had the words written down again, along with a few added words, presumably the curse God issued upon Zedekiah and his descendants for trying to consign God's Word to the fire.

What's ironic about this story is the fact that while the impressive Temple in which Baruch read the scroll is gone, the king's beautiful winter palace is gone, and even the great imperial Babylon, which threatened Judah at this time, is long gone, words committed to the very flimsiest of materials—scroll paper—are still with us today.

One would expect a stone structure to outlast something as fragile as words on a page. As it turns out, it was the Temple that would burn in the fire of Babylon's wrath. Yet Jeremiah's seemingly defenseless words would thunder through the ages. Seeing that Jeremiah's words truly anticipated God's plans for Israel's future and provided the clearest possible explanation for the eight turbulent centuries from his time to the beginning of the Christian church, the New Testament apostles appealed to his prophecies again and again. In the twenty centuries since, rabbis, priests, pastors, scholars, skeptics, and believers have carefully read the Word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah.

It is no coincidence that the man who felt God's word as a "fire shut up in his bones" has, in turn, set the world on fire. The Jews, unlike the Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans, were not a people of great architectural prowess. Even Solomon's magnificent Temple owed its impressiveness to the skill and labor of other nations. Solomon had to hire Hiram of Tyre and his workers to build it. (See I Kings 5:1-10.) 

Israel's legacy was not to be made in stone edifices. Israel's legacy was and is the Word of God. While other nations and empires poured their genius into their buildings and sought immortality in their structures, the Jews devoted themselves to recording the Word of the Lord.

 **Why is the Word of God disregarded by some?**

LESSON BIG IDEA: In revealing that God’s word created the universe, Genesis indicates how central the word of God was and continues to be in Creation.

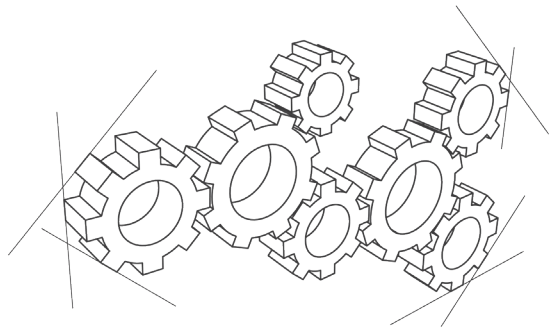
Why must we never disregard God’s Word?

God’s Word is eternal and never passes away. It was there in the beginning, speaking the world into existence, and it upholds, or forms the basis of the world, even as we speak. And in the end, when all things have faded away—far beyond the power of memory or even the lifespan of stone—the Word of the Lord will remain. God’s Word gives life. It creates, preserves, and endures. To live outside His Word is to reverse the creative process; it is to bring death. But to live by God’s Word is to have life eternal.

And coming back to where we began with Lügenbold, to follow God’s Word is to participate in the life of God—His desires, His purposes, and His “memories.” The villagers who listened to Lügenbold had to become active and willing participants in his stories, believing in the integrity of his words. And, again, this fact of storytelling is an echo of God’s creative word in Genesis chapter one.

The Scripture does not say that God said: “Light, appear!” “Sky, appear!” and so forth. These would have been commands. Instead, God said: “Let there be” Somewhere between command and invitation, God’s Word goes forth; it does not impose. The Word of God is a word to the obedient—a challenge to respond. And, should you respond with obedience, you too will participate in God’s creative purposes for your life. And should you say “yes” to His “let there be,” your life, joined to what is eternal, will be as indestructible and persistent as the Word of God has always been.

Small Group Leader's Guide



Spiritual Gifts: *The Creative and Eternal Word*

Opening Question: Who do you know who tells the best stories? Why is he or she such a good storyteller?

Scripture Focus: Genesis 1:1-26

Tell the story of Lügenbold (the Storyteller) on page 88.

Group Discussion:

- Why is it difficult for some to believe God created the world? ⚙️
- How do we make sure the Word of God stays central to our lives?
- What do you personally need to do to make God's Word more a part of your life?
- What does it mean to be subtle? ⚙️
- How is Satan's subtlety seen in our world today?
- Why is doubt such a powerful tool of the enemy?
- Why is it difficult for people to put their faith in the idea of Creation? ⚙️
- Why is it important for us to affirm our belief in God as Creator?
- How have you witnessed the power of God's Word?
- Why does the Word of God need to be at the center of our lives? ⚙️
- How do we learn to hear His voice?
- How can we place safeguards around our hearts and minds?
- How does sin deceive us?
- How do we deceive ourselves? ⚙️
- What verse has given you strength in the past?

Prayer Focus

Lord, I believe You made the world and created all things by Your word. I want Your Word to be at the center of my life. I want to hear Your voice speak to me through Your Word. I pray You would protect my heart and mind from deception. I choose to believe Your Word and not doubt.