

SESSION 1: CARING FOR CREATION

LET THERE BE...STUFF?
A SPIRIT-FILLED RESPONSE TO A CONSUMER-CRAZED WORLD
A Faith-Based Program for Jewish Teens



created by

THE STORY OF
STUFF
PROJECT


GreenFaithSM
Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth

www.storyofstuff.org

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version 1.0

SESSION 1: OVERVIEW

Caring for Creation

ENTER & CONNECT – 3 MIN

ICEBREAKER – 7 MIN

Option 1 – Web of Life

Option 2 – I Love My Neighbor Who...

INTRODUCE – 2 MIN

Set Context for the Session

THINK/FEEL – 5 MIN

Option 1 – Slide Show on Awe and Wonder

Option 2 - Behold Creation Circle

REFLECT – 10 MIN

EXPRESS – 10 MIN

Mural: Caring For Creation

ENACT – 23 MIN

GROUP PROMISE - 8 MIN

SET UP BUDDIES – 5 MIN

ACTION PLAN – 8 MIN

EXIT – 2 MIN

Materials for Session 1

- Student Roster
- Tally Sheet
- Session 1 Text sheets
- Bible Text sheets

Ice Breaker

- A ball of green wool yarn or string (organic wool with natural dye if possible)
- 8" pieces of the same yarn for promise strings

Promise Poster

- Promise Sheet handouts for each student
- A flip chart size piece of paper
- Colored pens/non-toxic markers

Slideshow

- Downloaded Power Point slide show
- Computer
- Projector
- Speakers
- Screen

Mural

- A stack of nature magazines (ask church members to donate)
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Colored pens
- Butcher paper

Buddy Set Up

- Paper & pen
- 1 Hat or bowl

Action Plan

- Binders – 1 per student
- Action Plan Instructions – 1 per student
- Action Plan for Session – 1 per student



Session 1 To-Do List

- Print student roster
- Print point tally sheet
- Mural – post a piece of butcher paper on the wall prior to class. Write Caring for Creation as the title
- Creation slide show – Download slide show, set up a slide show projector and screen. Select quiet, ambient background music to play with it and cue it. Have student text sheets ready to hand out
- Promise poster - Have a large piece of paper posted on the wall. Title it "We Promise..." for the Promise Poster
- Make copies of Session 1 Text sheets, 1 for every 2-3 students.
- Make copies of promise sheets, 1 per student
- Make copies of Action Plan instructions, 1 per student
- Make copies of Action Plans Session 1, 1 per student
- Buddy selection – write each student's name on a piece of paper and put it in a hat
- Have binders for each student ready to hand out
- Select music for Closing Circle

Preparing for Session One

Facilitation Preparation

Congratulations, you are about to launch the course! Because there are a lot of logistics to get through in this session it might be easy to get distracted from the spirit and purpose of the session – to instill the sense of awe and wonder at Creation and build a strong foundation for the group to have a rich and productive journey together.

Make sure you really feel comfortable with the flow of the session so you can be as relaxed and welcoming as possible. The most important thing is to start off on the right foot and create a good feeling among the group as they start their adventure together.

This session can establish the level of safety students feel in expressing themselves honestly. Take the time to really hear and validate feelings students share. The more you establish a safe space for sharing what will likely be positive feelings in this session, the easier it will be for students to share more difficult emotions when they come up later in the course.

Overview

This session launches the program, helps the group form, and sets up the structures for students to learn together. It focuses on helping students open their hearts to feel the awe and wonder of Creation in a way that moves and inspires them to take better care of it as Earth stewards. It provides a context for the journey they're on and the challenges ahead and establishes ways they can support each other in and between class.

Goals

- Build a safe, respectful, supportive community
- Open their hearts to feel the wonder and awe of Creation
- Inspire them to become good Earth Stewards
- Provide a Jewish context for their choice to take care of the world
- Develop a strong commitment to participate fully

Themes

Religious

- Awe and wonder at Creation
- Earth stewardship

Jewish Source Texts

- Genesis 1:1-5
- Psalm 1-4

Notes on Jewish Sources

Throughout the Bible, we see that Creation is a sign of God's creativity and love, and that God wants us to serve as its protectors and stewards. This is particularly found in Psalm 104 which is which is a Creation hymn and one of the most beautiful poems ever written about the natural world. One biblical scholar considers it a poetic precursor to the Creation story of Genesis 1 but with a different emphasis. Psalm 104 does not really describe the process of creation but is rather a panorama of the natural world, its intention is to praise God as Creator for God's great wisdom in conceiving and producing such an astonishingly beautiful place The wisdom of God is revealed in creation through God's ability to devise, create and preserve the wonders and diversity of the world.

The core of Psalm 194 (verses 14-23) show how God provides for both human and animal needs. Although this section of the psalm begins with human work and ends with human work, the main part of this segment is devoted to showing us how the wild animals are part of the same world that we inhabit. Just as God takes care of humans, God takes care of the other creatures. The poet reveals a world of God's concern that is beyond the human world. Humans have their daily schedule and so do animals; all are part of a God created design in which no priority is given to human society. In the climax of the psalm (verses 24-25) there is expressed the wonder and the astonishment of the psalmist at the wisdom of God revealed in the incredible variety and plenitude of life. This is a similar theology to philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel's concept of "radical amazement."

The purpose of this psalm then is evoke the wonder of creation by shaking us out of our familiarity with the natural world in which we normally find ourselves by forcing us to see the constant newness of creation and its mystery.

Nishmat Kol Chai is a medieval prayer that is added to the traditional Jewish liturgy on Sabbath and holiday morning services. The title means "the breath of every living being." In the selections quoted we acknowledge that every living thing that God created by its every breath is continually praising God. And even if we were granted the power of infinite blessing we could never put into words the gratitude that we feel for all that God has done for us and for all of Creation.

Jewish Source Text

For the slide show, just read sections in **bold**.

Genesis 1

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!"

And light appeared.

God saw that light was good

and separated light from dark.

God named the light Day,

he named the dark Night.

It was evening, it was morning—

Day One.

God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters; separate water from water!"

God made sky.

He separated the water under sky

from the water above sky.

And there it was:

he named sky the Heavens;

It was evening, it was morning—

Day Two.

God spoke: "Separate!

Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;

Land, appear!"

And there it was.

God named the land Earth.

He named the pooled water Ocean.

God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants,

Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."

And there it was.

Earth produced green seed-bearing plants,

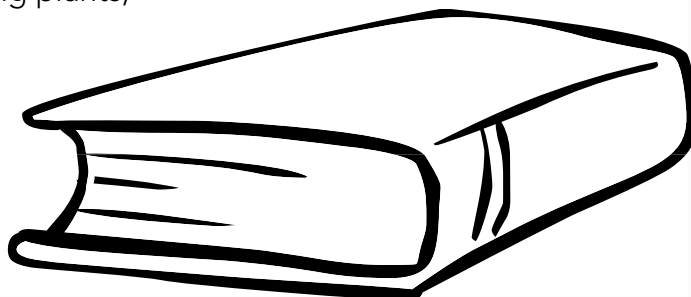
all varieties,

And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.

God saw that it was good.

It was evening, it was morning—

Day Three.



Jewish Source Text Cont.

**God spoke: "Lights! Come out!
Shine in Heaven's sky!
Separate Day from Night.
Mark seasons and days and years,
Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth."
And there it was.**

God made two big lights, the larger
to take charge of Day,
The smaller to be in charge of Night;
and he made the stars.
God placed them in the heavenly sky
to light up Earth
And oversee Day and Night,
to separate light and dark.
God saw that it was good.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Four.

**God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life!
Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!"
God created the huge whales,
all the swarm of life in the waters,
And every kind and species of flying birds.
God saw that it was good.**

God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean!
Birds, reproduce on Earth!"
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Five.

**God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind:
cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds."
And there it was:
wild animals of every kind,
Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug.
God saw that it was good.**

**God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them
reflecting our nature
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,
And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."**

Jewish Source Text Cont.

God created human beings;

he created them godlike,
Reflecting God's nature.

He created them male and female.

God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

Then God said, "I've given you
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,
given them to you for food.
To all animals and all birds,
everything that moves and breathes,
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."
And there it was.

God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good!

It was evening, it was morning—
Day Six.

Heaven and Earth were finished, down to the last detail.

By the seventh day
God had finished his work.
On the seventh day
he rested from all his work.
God blessed the seventh day.
He made it a Holy Day
Because on that day he rested from his work,
all the creating God had done.

Jewish Source Text Cont.

Psalm 104

Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty,

wrapped in a robe of light; You spread the heavens like a tent cloth.

He sets the rafters of His lofts in the waters, makes the clouds His chariot, moves on the wings of the wind.

He makes the winds His messengers, fiery flames His servants.

He established the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never totter.

You made the deep cover it as a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

They fled at Your blast, rushed away at the sound of Your thunder,

--mountains rising, valleys sinking—to the place You established for them.

You set bounds they must not pass so that they never again cover the earth.

You make springs gush forth in torrents; they make their way between the hills, giving drink to all the wild beasts; the wild asses slake their thirst.

The birds of the sky dwell beside them and sing among the foliage.

You water the mountains from Your lofts; the earth is sated from the fruit of Your work.

You make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for humanity's labor that he may get food out of the earth—

wine that cheers the hearts of people, oil that makes the face shine, and bread that sustains a man's life.

The trees of the Lord drink their fill, the cedars of Lebanon, His own planting, where birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the junipers.

The high mountains are for wild goats; the crags are a refuge for rock-badgers.

He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows when to set.

Jewish Source Text Cont.

You bring on darkness and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest stir.

The lions roar for prey, seeking their food from God.

When the sun rises, they come home and couch in their dens.

Man then goes out to his work to his labor until the evening.

How many are the things You have made, O Lord; You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of Your creations.

There is the sea, vast and wide, with its creatures beyond number, living things, small and great.

There go the ships, and Leviathan that You formed to sport with.

All of them look to You to give them their food when it is due.

Give it to them, they gather it up; open Your hand; they are well satisfied;

hide Your face, they are terrified; take away their breath, they perish and turn again into dust;

send back Your breath, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works!

He looks at the earth and it trembles; He touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; all my life I will chant hymns to my God.

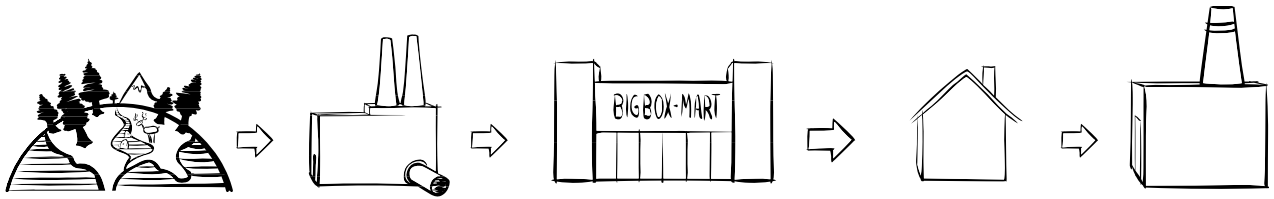
May my prayer be pleasing to Him; I will rejoice in the Lord.

May sinners disappear from the earth and the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Hallelujah.

Nishmat Kol Chai

The breath of all that lives praises You, Lord our God. The spirit of all flesh exalts You, our Sovereign, always... Could song fill our mouth as water fills the sea and could joy flood our tongue like countless waves—Could our lips utter praise as limitless as the sky and could our eyes match the splendor of the sun—Could we soar with arms like eagle's

SESSION 1 – Caring For Creation



Enter and Connect - (5 min.)

Warmly welcome students and give them nametags and pens to write their names.

Opening prayer (1 min.)



Blessed are You, who created everything that exists, and gave us the gift and privilege of living in this beautiful world. Help us to remember earth's majesty and splendor and give us the ability to awaken that memory in everyone we know. Blessed are you, who connects us to Creation, AMEN.

Welcome!

Let them know how happy you are that they care about Creation enough to take the time to learn how to take good care of it together. It's going to be a great adventure, one that could change their lives in ways that honor and protects God's Creation and give them a deeper, more enduring joy.

Introductions

Go around the circle and have each student share their name, where they live and go to school, and one thing they want others to know about them. As they do, take notes on your roster. When you introduce yourself, share what inspired you to lead the course and why you want to work with teens in particular. Bring humor!

**Possible
Ice-Breaker
Questions** **TRY THIS**

- What is one of your favorite animals? And in what ways do you resemble it?
- What's one thing about yourself that you really like?
- What's one of your little personality quirks – strange and unique habits that other people usually laugh about?
- What is your favorite natural place? And what do you like to do there?
- What is the longest amount of time you've ever been outdoors without coming indoors? Where were you and what were you doing?
- Why did you choose to be part of this course?
- What do you hope to get out of it? How do you expect it to help you?
- In your opinion, what do you think it will take to make the course work?

Change it up...

If it gets too confusing having students raise their hands to indicate they have something in common with the student who answered the question, just skip that part. Instead, just have students ask a question and throw the ball of yarn to the person they want to have answer it.

Ice-Breaker (7 min)**Option 1: Web of Life (recommended)****Instructions:**

1. Sitting in a circle, start by holding the ball of yarn with the end of the yarn firmly in one hand. Ask a question from the ice-breaker list. Then toss the yarn to the person you want to have answer it.
2. The person who receives the ball answers the question then asks every student who has something in common with the answer to raise their hand.
3. Then, they ask a new question and, holding onto a little pinch from their segment of yarn the student throws the ball of yarn to one of the students who has raised his/her hand.
4. That student answers it and asks everybody who has something in common with the answer to raise their hands. They then ask a new question and throw it to one of the people s/he has something in common with holding onto a segment of the yarn so that it starts to form a web.
5. Keep going until everybody has answered at least one question.
6. Then connect to the idea of the web of life and how everything is connected to everything else by saying:

You can see from this tangle of yarn, that we are all connected in some ways, our lives are woven into each other's at school, synagouge, our neighborhoods. All of life is woven together in a similar way. For instance...

 **SAY THIS**

What do you think it took to make this yarn? (let students answer questions) The wool, (pause) the sheep, (pause) the person who tended the sheep, (pause) the grass, the rain, the sun, the food the shepherd ate, the loom, the factory workers, etc. etc. all the way to God. When you look at this yarn can you see the sunshine and rain? Can you see God?

Ice-Breaker (7 min)

Option 2. "I love my neighbor who ____"

Instructions:

1. Sit in a circle and take one chair out so there is one less chair than there are people.
2. Give the instruction that one person stands in the center of the circle and says "I love my neighbor who___(fill in the blank with a quality or characteristic, i.e. "has red hair, has homeroom with Mr. Smith, etc.)"
3. If you are part of the group being identified you have to move from your chair to another chair before all the chairs are taken. Because there is one less chair than number of students somebody will always be left standing.
4. The person left standing goes to the middle and calls out the next quality with the sentence, "I love my neighbor who...."
5. Do about 5-8 rounds.

Introduce (2 min)

Hand out the Session 1 Readings sheet. In a circle have students read the following, one paragraph per person

READ ALOUD

1.1 - It can take a lot of courage to face the ways we humans are treating the world. The first time we hear about the clear cutting of forests or the melting of the polar caps, we might immediately commit to recycling everything and carpooling more often. But then, if we don't get support or feel like we're making a difference we can lose our enthusiasm, close our heart, and just give up.

1.2 - The fact that we are here means that we haven't given up! We do have the courage, belief, and strength it takes. This course is an invitation to our best selves to do what we all know in our heart of hearts is the right thing to do, what God wants us to do - to celebrate and take care of God's Creation - to become good stewards of the earth.

1.3 - We're about to go on a journey together. Our first step is to open our hearts wide and let ourselves care about the world again to feel the wonder and awe of Creation. We usually ignore the things we don't care about, but we naturally take care of the things we love. Our first job is to remember our love for this world and the role God wants us to play in relation to it.

Think/Feel (5 min)

Option 1 - Creation Slide Show

This is a chance to open to the wonder and awe of Creation. Help students by creating a reverent mood. You might even light a candle. Encourage silence and invite students to imagine they are witnessing the creation of the world from nothing into everything.

Instructions:

1. Hand out the text of Genesis, if you haven't already.
2. Ask for volunteers to read only the sections in bold, one reader per section. Tell them they will take turns, each one reading a short section. The first sentence of their section will appear on the slide when it's time for them to read it. Every 2-3 slides there will be a cue for a student to read.
3. Determine the order of the readers before you start the slide show so you can watch it with as few disruptions as possible.
4. We suggest you find a nice selection of calm, quiet music to play in the background.
5. Only the reader and the facilitator will speak during the slide show.
6. Ask if there are any questions and if everybody is clear, begin the show.
7. After the slide show ask:

SAY THIS

- *What did you feel while you were watching the slideshow?*
- *Which images gave you a sense of awe and wonder?*
- *How does it feel to think about what we're doing to this world?*



Help make it feel safe for students to have and share their feelings by validating all the feelings expressed. When someone shares a strong feeling, you might ask if others share those feelings. You can share your own as well.

THINK/FEEL

Think/Feel (5 min)

Option 2 - Behold Creation Circle

This is another way to open the group to awe and wonder by looking at the world around them as they imagine the genesis of Creation.

Instructions:

1. Lead the group outside to a natural area and take the Bible passage with you. If it's too difficult or time consuming to get them outside have them turn to look out a window.
2. Whether indoors or outside have them sit in a circle and face away from each other.
3. Read aloud Genesis and pause after each day of creation. Ask volunteers to call out things that remind them of what God created on the first day. Repeat the process for each day of creation, encouraging students to be reflective and creative in their answers.

After you've read aloud Genesis, have students turn around to discuss these questions:

- *What feelings came up as you reflected on Creation?*
- *How does it feel to think about how we're harming Creation?*
- *How do you think your view of creation would be different if you had witnessed God's creation of the world?*
- *How would you feel about Creation if you were God – and had created it?*



Reflect (10 min)

1. Have students get in pairs and give them a minute to reflect on each of the following questions (4 min):



- *What is your favorite place outdoors? What do you love about it?*
- *What happened there that was special for you?*
- *Have you ever felt God's presence outdoors?*
- *Where and when? What happened? What did you feel?*

2. Have the pairs come back to the large circle and share some of their reflections with the whole group (2 min.)
3. Then ask one of the students to read Psalm 8. Share some of the reasons that you enjoy this passage, and what it means to you. After the text has been read, ask participants to discuss the following questions:



- *What do you think God feels about the earth?*
- *How should we feel for all that God has given us?*
- *What do you think God feels when people pollute?*
- *How should we feel when we degrade Creation?*

Express (10 min)

Mural Making – Caring For Creation

Prep: Have butcher paper posted on wall and magazine, scissors, pens, and glue available

Students will be creating a series of murals together corresponding to the themes of the sessions. The murals will help them share what they're learning with the congregation and inspire others. Their first mural expresses their care for Creation.

Instructions:

1. Offer the stack of nature magazines, scissors, and glue.
2. Post a large piece of Butcher paper on wall.
3. Have someone print the title: Caring for Creation!
4. Invite students to look through the magazines, find a picture of the specific part of the natural world that inspires them to care for Creation, cut out the picture and paste it to the Butcher paper.
5. Then, write a sentence under the image that explains what inspires them about it.
6. Have them share with the whole group what they wrote and why they picked that part of creation.

Enact (25 min)

Write and sign group promise together (8 min)

Prep: Have promise sheets, promise poster, and 8" pieces of yarn ready.

They will be making a group promise together to create safety and support their journey.



Promises are what hold the world together. In the end, laws can force us to do certain things – but the best things in life happen because we make promises to each other and keep them! When people make and keep promises to each other, extraordinary things can happen.

1. Invite them to make a promise to each other about this course.
2. Invite a student to go to the large poster titled "We Promise" and serve as scribe.
3. Have students take turns reading the promises from the Group Promise sheet (at the end of this session plan).
4. As you agree on each promise, the scribe should write the key word on the poster.
5. Once you have made the list, ask the group again if they are all willing to make these promises? It's unlikely that they will object, but make sure you make room to hear if anybody has any concerns about being able to keep their promise.
6. Ask if they want to add some other promises to this list, or replace some of our promises with their own. If your group decides to add some promises, write them in on the bottom of the poster. Your group might also want to create some group rules, like not interrupting when someone else is speaking or sitting up instead of lying down. You can list those at the bottom of the Promises Poster as well.
7. When you've got the list of promises finished, each person should sign their name on the poster.
8. Take out the 8" pieces of the yarn and have students tie a piece around each other's wrist as they say:



I _____ (their name) promise to use this course to engage with community and tradition by becoming a better earth steward!

9. Tell them they can keep this string on their wrist as a reminder of their commitment to community and Creation!
10. Congratulate them on making the commitment!

Enact (25 min)

Set up buddies (5 min)

Prep: Put student's names on small pieces of paper and put the names in a hat or bowl.

You are going to set up buddies for the program. Let them know that the purpose of a buddy is to provide support for the actions they choose to do between sessions and to make it more fun. We can't do it alone; we need each other.

Have students volunteer to draw their buddy's name out of a hat. Once buddies form, if somebody's name gets chosen who already has a buddy, just take the name out of the hat and have the person choose another name. If buddies do not seem to be a good fit, change them throughout the program as needed.

Action Plans

Prep: Have Action Plan Instructions and Action Plans ready to hand out.

Action Plans will set them up to take action during the week between sessions.

Explanation:

- Because becoming good Earth stewards means taking new actions in their lives, they will be choosing and committing to taking actions between each session.
- Each of the actions they take is worth 1-3 points.
- The number of points reflects the amount of effort it takes and is next to the action.
- They are on the honor system here and will be trusted to tally their own points and give you the number at the beginning of each session. At the end of the course, you will add up their points and see who got the most.
- They're also all going to vote on who they think should win different awards, like Best at Behavior Change, Best Communicator, Best Insights, Most Improved Earth Steward, Most Sustainably Stylish, etc. They can also make up their own categories so everyone can win an award.
- They will be collecting these sheets in their binder.
- Encourage them to decorate their binder cover. They will be sharing their binder cover at the beginning of the next session.

Enact (25 min)

Action Plans

Instructions:

1. Hand out binders.
2. Hand out the Action Plan instruction sheet and Action Plan Session 1 sheet.
3. Go over the Action Plan instructions together (2 min.)
4. Have them decide on their actions for the week (5 min.)
5. Instruct students keep these sheets in their binders for easy reference. They will be referring to them at every session when they take their actions.

Students receive the instructions below:

Action Plan Instruction Sheet

Read and think about the actions:

- Which actions would you like to do?
- Which seem like you could do them?
- Which seem like fun?
- Which seem as if they will really make a difference?

Decide which actions to take.

- Decide which actions you will do with your buddy and which you will do by yourself.

Remember to:

- Show your parent(s)/guardian(s) your action plan when you get home and ask them to support you. Think of what support you want from them. Ask them how they want to support you.
- Check in with your buddy at least one time this week.
- You can change your action plans.
- You can catch up on any unfinished actions at anytime.
- Take pictures or document what you do so you can share it!

Exit (2 min)

EXIT

Remember:

- Decorate their binders.
- Do their Actions
- See the awe and wonder in Creation!

Closing song:

Select at your discretion.

Blessing:

Invite participants to stand in a circle and offer a short prayer of thanks for their favorite place and for what it means to them. For instance, one person might pray:

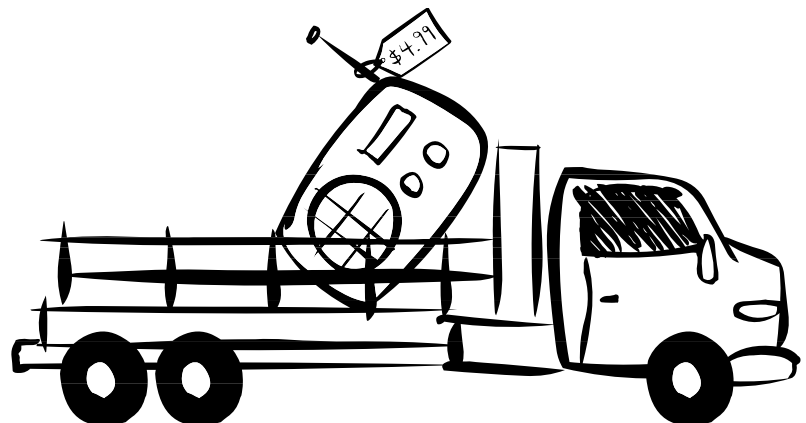
“Thank you God, for the beautiful sunset I saw at XYZ place – remembering it always makes me feel happy and grateful.”

WE WANNA KNOW...

How did it go? How much time did the exercises actually take? What worked?

What didn't? What do you think would work better? Let us know at:

www.storyofstuff.org/teach.php



Action Plan Instructions

Read and think about the actions:

- Which actions would you like to do?
- Which seem like you could do them?
- Which seem like fun?
- Which seem as if they will really make a difference?

Decide which actions to take:

- Decide which actions you will do with your buddy and which you will do by yourself

Remember to:

- Show your parents your action plan when you get home and ask them to support you. Think of what support you want from them. Ask them how they want to support you.
- Check in with your buddy at least one time this week.
- You can change your action plans.
- You can catch up on any unfinished actions at anytime.
- Take pictures or document what you do so you can share it!

Group Promise

I promise to...

Do everything I can to care better for Creation with the help of my community. I commit to the following:

Consistency

I will make my best effort to attend each session of this course.

Honesty

I will take risks to share truthfully my personal feelings and thoughts during this course even if these feelings are uncomfortable.

Respect

I will help create a safe environment by listening carefully and not making fun of others.

Confidentiality

I will not reveal personal information shared by others during our sessions. What I hear here I will keep here.

Accountability

I invite the students in this course to hold me accountable for growing spiritually and living a life that honors God and Creation

Prayer

I will pray each week for the people in our course, for God to help us learn, and for Creation's healing.

This promise, signed by all the participants in our course, reflects our commitment to each other, to God, and to Creation.

Session 1: Action Plan

Create/Express

- Inspired Art - Spend the week with a camera, a sketchpad, or a notebook, taking photos, drawing pictures, or writing a poem every time you're inspired by something in nature. (2 pts)

Communicate

- Stewardship Poster - Make and display a poster for your synagogue, school, or home that reminds us of our call to be stewards of the earth. (3 pts)

Worship

- Dear God - Write a letter to God expressing your gratitude, desire and commitment to care for creation (2 pts)
- Find Blessings - Create a ritual that helps you remember to appreciate and celebrate creation (i.e. Start and end each day looking out the window and giving thanks for at least 5 things you feel grateful for about the natural world). (2pts)
- Learn a Blessing- Most Jewish prayer books have a section of nature blessings – traditional Jewish blessings over things like smelling beautiful flowers, seeing a rainbow, seeing a beautiful view, and even rain and thunder. Learn two of those blessings and look for opportunities to say them. (2 pts.)

Learn

- What's THAT? - Pick some aspect of nature that you want to learn more about and do some research about it. Write it up in one page. (2 pts)
- Adopt a _____ - Identify a place or a kind of plant or animal that you especially want to honor and find out what, if anything is threatening its survival. Then identify a group or organization that is helping it and spend an hour volunteering with the group. (3 pts.)

Try Something New

- Garden Time - Spend time in a garden. Plant your own or volunteer in someone else's. Find out about any community garden in your area and go visit it. (3 pts)
- Three Gifts - Remember the picture you put on the mural. Think of three creative, unusual ways in which you can actively care for that part of Creation. For example, if you're inspired by sunrises you could ride a bike to school to cut down on smog, take a photograph of a sunrise, and write a worshipful poem about sunrises. (3 pts)

Be a Leader

With peers

- Take a Hike - Skip the movies this weekend and coordinate a local hike with friends to get out into God's creation and really soak it in. It's free, it's gorgeous and nothing inspires stewardship for the earth like a little time in nature. (3 pts)

At home

- Plant It - Talk to your parents about growing some herbs, veggies, or flowers at home and then (weather permitting) plant something! This can easily be done in a pot. Go to www.icangarden.com (3 pts)

Journal

- Question of the week: What about the Earth do you tend to take for granted? What can you do to remember to appreciate it? (2 pts)

Total # of Points _____

Session 1 : Readings

1.1 - It can take a lot of courage to face the ways we humans are treating the world. The first time we hear about the clear cutting of forests or the melting of the polar caps, we might immediately commit to recycling everything and carpooling more often. But then, if we don't get support or feel like we're making a difference we can lose our enthusiasm, close our heart, and just give up.

1.2 - The fact that we are here means that we haven't given up! We do have the courage, belief, and strength it takes. This course is an invitation to our best selves to take do what we all know in our heart of hearts is the right thing to do, the Godly thing to do - to celebrate and take care of Creation - to become good stewards of the earth.

1.3 - We're about to go on a journey together. Our first step is to open our hearts wide and let our selves care about the world again to feel the wonder and awe of Creation. We usually ignore the things we don't care about but we naturally to take care of the things we love. Our first job is to remember our love for this world and understand our role in relation to it.

