

Warming Up, Warming Down

This first week looking at the Exodus story involves thinking about creation and the enslavement of the people of Israel in Egypt. In planning all age worship or a separate Sunday School lesson it is important to reflect both elements: creation and captivity. Two of the resources below, *Creator and Provider* and *The Creation Collage* may prove to be too long for a service or a Sunday School lesson without careful thought and adaptation. Suggestions as to how they can be used are made below.

Psalm of creation

{=children} {=all-age services}

Use this simple activity early in the service to open up the creation element of today's theme. This version of Psalm 104 encourages active responses each time a key word is spoken in the reading. Introduce each key word and teach its response. Make the actions big and clear, so a massive 'stirring and chugging' routine for **made** – and so on. Practise each one before launching into the reading.

Key words and responses

Made – mix cement with appropriate noises

Planted – dig hole

Rain – 'Splitter spatter!'

Earth – rub fingers together

Eat – chewing noises

Trees - hold up arms, fingers splayed

When God **made** everything, he took the heavens and spread them out like a very big tent. He **made** springs begin to flow in the valleys, and rivers in the hills. He watched as the animals came to the water to drink when they were thirsty, and nearby, in the **trees** that God had **planted**, the birds began to sing.

He **made rain** and dropped it from the sky, and it helped the **earth** and **made** things grow. There was grass for the cows to **eat**, and plants and vegetables for the people. Crops began to grow, and the people made lovely fresh bread from the corn, and wine from the grapes. The tall **trees** on the mountains got plenty of **rain** as well. God was proud of those **trees**; he **planted** them himself. The birds came and **made** nests in the **trees** and wild goats lived in the mountains and badgers in the cliffs.

The **earth** is crammed full of animals that God has **made**, and the sea full of creatures – there are too many of them to count. He sends **rain** to give us food to **eat**, and to water the **trees** he has **planted**.

He has **made** so many things and we all depend on him. Let us always remember that the **earth** is God's –and let's thank him for everything he has **made**.

From *Telling Tales*, Dave Hopwood, © CPAS

Chains

{=children} {=11–18s} {=all-age services}

Use this activity as a response to the Exodus 1 story and as a link to the intercessions or as the basis for Sunday School prayers. Provide strips of paper approximately 30 x 3.5 cm (A4 cut lengthwise into six) and pens. Alternatively buy ready-made paper-chain strips. Ask each person to take a strip and write (or draw) on it a favourite item that belongs to them. Select another strip and write (or draw) on it something that they would love to have. Use glue-sticks to join the 'links' people have made to build into chains. As you do so, chat about some of the items that have been mentioned.

Ask when we might use paper chains. They are often used at celebrations and we should be able to enjoy and thank God for all the wonderful things we have written down. Now put the chains on some volunteers – attaching them to wrists and ankles with further strips of paper. Talk together about the ways in which the things people have *or would like to have* can make them like prisoners or slaves:

- afraid of losing what we have
- wishing we had more or better things
- envying other people.

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People can also make others into slaves by stopping them from getting what they need – just as the Egyptians did to the Hebrews. You may like to briefly discuss issues of justice in trade and the fair trade movement. Millions are poor because the West keeps people poor. The story of Ashique (*see below*) could be easily linked to this idea.

Free ‘the prisoners’ and display the chains as a reminder of what you have talked about. Pray briefly, thanking God again for the good things in his world. You might put the broken chains over a large cross to illustrate Christ setting us free. The theme of *Chains* is picked up in the intercessions offered in the [Liturgical Resources](#) for this week.

OPTION With a group including older children, teenagers or adults, ask each person to use further strips of paper to write some of the ‘enslaving’ ideas which people have about possessions and wealth. For example: ‘I wish I had one of those.’ ‘I’m scared I won’t have enough when I’m older.’ Listen to the ideas and make them into chains.

Slavery today: Ashique’s story

{=children}{=11–18s}{=all-age services}

This simple activity could follow on from “Chains” and should lead into prayer; it is a powerful story and needs a positive follow on rather than just leave it hanging. Some people, many people, are still in chains. Read the following story of Ashique who lives in Lahore, Pakistan, to show how slavery still happens in the world today. Use the story to lead into the prayers. Sample intercessions are provided in the liturgy file.

Ask a child as close as possible to 11 to say Ashique’s words. [*The text is from Anti-Slavery International www.antislavery.org. Similar stories can be found at the Christian Aid and TEAR fund websites*] This story is from Lahore in Pakistan where children work in the brick-making industry to pay off a debt owed by their family. This is known as ‘bonded labour’ which is the most widespread form of slavery in the world today.

‘My name is Ashique. I am eleven years old and have been working in the brick kilns for the past six years with my father and three brothers. My father borrowed 20,000 rupees (about £400) to pay for my sister’s marriage and now we have to work hard to pay off the loan.

‘I work every day except Sunday. My father, brothers and myself are paid thirty rupees (50p) for every 1000 bricks. We can make around 2,500 to 3000 bricks in a day. Our wage is cut by 50 per cent for loan repayments. We do not understand the loan interest, which seems to be always increasing. We work from around 2am - when it is still dark - until 6 or 7pm in the evening. We have a short rest of half an hour between 7 and 8 am. I am given no time to play.

‘My father sent me to school, but after three months the kiln owner took me out of school and put me back to work. I liked going to school. I liked being free.’

Creator and provider

{=children} {=11–18s} {=all-age services}

This is an extensive activity based around Psalm 104 and it aims to celebrate the richness of God’s creation. Careful preparation will be important and not every part of the activity could or should be attempted. If the activity is used remember to leave time for addressing the captivity part of the teaching based on Exodus chapter 1. It might be used at a special Saturday morning or an evening activity either for children or as an all age activity. This activity could be used as a warm up activity for an away day for children’s ministry leaders. In particular it could be linked into an all age activity at Harvest Festival time.

Using the ideas

Begin by determining how many of the Psalm 104 activities suggested below it is possible to offer, given the space, time and helpers available. One approach is to simply have all group members working on the same activity at any one time and doing one activity after another. Another approach is to create ‘stations’ around your activity space using tables or defining workspaces for each activity. Different groups could then work on different activities. People could choose the ones they want to do or circulate and attempt as many as they can in the time available. At each station the words of the relevant verses of the Psalm should be printed out. You may need a helper at each station to explain what to do.

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Preach Exodus! **Week One**

Read Psalm 104 at the beginning when everyone is together. If you have stations draw attention as you read to the relevant station, perhaps by having the reader for each few verses standing at the station in the room. Then people go to the various activities. At the end of the time bring everyone together to review the work that has been done and read the Psalm again.

The words in “*quotation marks and italics*” in the description of each activity should be printed on a separate sheet. They can be used to introduce each activity or as written instructions if the activities are spaced round the room.

- 1. Light robe** We see God is great (104:1-4).
Have a large piece of white fabric (e.g. an old sheet) laid out with a variety of colours of ready-mix washable poster paint in pots, and a good-sized brush for each one. Provide suitable protection for clothes and floor.
‘What do your clothes say about you? These verses say that light is like God’s robe. Join in painting this sheet to make a spectacular “robe of light”.’
(Optional extra: paint another sheet into a ‘sky tent’.)
- 2. Land and sea** God established land and sea ready for life (104:5-9).
Provide a jigsaw of a world map to complete. Either use a commercially produced one or cut up a map and put Blu-tac or magnetic strips on the back and use with a backing board.
‘Add some pieces to the jigsaw to see the pattern of land and sea in the world. Think of a part of the world you have been to or heard about. What plants, animals and people live there?’
(Optional extra: invite people to stick coloured stickers in any places on the map where they know someone, or which they have visited.)
- 3. Beautiful rain** God provides fresh water bringing life to the land (104:10-13)
Display items celebrating rain and the way it brings life, for example:
 - Photos of rain (these could be set up on a laptop to display in a cycle)
 - A rain stick
 - Cups and a jug of fresh iced drinking water - let participants have a drink at this point.
 - ‘Fascinating facts’ about water, perhaps to use as a quiz
 - If an elephant was standing here, it could smell a pool of water as far away as three miles
 - To produce the food we each eat every day takes between 2000 and 5000 litres of water *per person*
 - Between half and two-thirds of your body is water
 - Water is, in fact, very slightly blue. But you need lots of it to see that it is!
 - In dry Botswana, the word for rain is *pula*. It is also the word for ‘health’, ‘wealth’ and almost anything good. Can you guess the name of the Botswana unit of currency?
 - Play some ‘rain music’: ‘Rain, rain, beautiful rain’ (Ladysmith Black Mambazo on the albums *Heavenly* and *The best of...*); Gene Kelly’s ‘Singin’ in the rain’.*‘Imagine fresh cool water on a hot thirsty day. Stay for a while and enjoy what’s here.’*
- 4. Food from the earth** God gives us food and drink to bring life and happiness (104:14-18)
Display a selection of numbered food and drink items. Place a piece of paper beside each item. Ideally try to have a range of foods from around the world and perhaps a map where they come from.
‘All these items have their beginnings in the earth. Taste each one and write a comment or give a score out of ten to show how much you enjoyed it.’
- 5. Work and rest** God sets a natural cycle of work and rest (104:19-23)
Provide a dice and a good supply of building bricks e.g. Duplo or Lego with a base board. This activity is for two or more people.
‘What is the right balance between work and rest? One person starts building in any way they like. At the same time, the next rolls a dice until he or she gets a six. This means it is 6 o’clock and time to change shift! The next person continues building while the first person rests. It’s now time for the third person in the group to start rolling the dice – and so on.’

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6. **How many?** God has filled the world with an abundance of life (104:24-26)

Provide a range of fabric pieces, coloured paper, white paper, pens, scissors and glue sticks. Prepare a board covered in blue paper.

'There are about 24,000 different kinds of fish in the world. How many can we make? Design some fish, cut them out and add them to the board.'

8. **Praise the Lord** God rejoices in what he has made and we praise him (104:31-35)

Set up a tape recorder and microphone. The helper asks each person to think of a short ending to the incomplete statements below. The helper should record an introduction along the lines of: 'Each of us thought of the one thing we like best in the whole of God's creation....' The helper then records the group members' brief responses one after another. Play the whole tape back to everyone later as an act of praise.

'The one thing in the whole of God's creation that I like best is.... Record your answers.'

Creation Collage

{=children{=11-18s} {=all-age services}}

This is a powerful, visual, interactive activity. It requires a group to work together to form a large piece of art in the context of telling a story. It is best suited to small group work but may be adapted for a larger group or small congregation. You will need plenty of space!

One option is to use this activity as the focus for the creation element of this weeks theme. Follow it by using the second [Godly Play script \(Exodus\)](#) or the [Action Scene](#) for the captivity element. As the Creation Collage covers the same ground as the first Godly Play script (Creation) it is not appropriate to attempt them both in the same service or Sunday School class. As before this activity could also be used at a special Harvest Festival event such as a Harvest Supper

You will need:

- A large sheet of black fabric (ideally about 3 metres square or larger)
- Blue fabric, such as blue scarves or long pieces of material or crepe paper cut into long strips
- A globe or picture of the world
- Sequins, glow-in-the-dark stars
- Tea light or candle
- Leaves – either real or fabric
- Flowers – either real or artificial
- Pebbles and stones
- Seeds
- Feathers
- Pictures or felt shapes of animals, fish, birds, people, etc
- Play dough

The idea of this activity is to enable people to participate in the telling of the story of creation and to witness 'abundance' through the creation of a collage. The story begins as you dramatically spread out the large black sheet in the middle of the group. As the creation story unfolds you give enough space/time for people to contribute to the scene using the materials that have been spread out around the sheet. Ask them to add whatever they feel is appropriate at each stage in the story. The items are not glued onto the sheet – they are placed or scattered where each individual wants them to be. The key is to encourage people to respond creatively and expressively as they listen to the story. You can help people to participate in the storytelling by asking questions about what happened next or by giving descriptions or examples of different aspects of creation.

You might choose to tell the story through music:

Creation Song – Ishmael, from 'Ishmael's Family Worship

The simplest approach is to prepare a vivid reading of Genesis 1:1 – 2:2 in the translation or paraphrase that you think is most appropriate for the group.

The following ideas may help you plan the activity.

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Before creation:

Nothing

Spread out the black sheet.

Day 1: Light

Place a lighted candle or tea light securely in the middle of the sheet. For safety, extinguish it after this first step in the creation of the collage and relight it when the whole picture is complete.

Day 2: Water, sky

At this stage you might want to place the globe in the centre of the sheet. Add the blue fabric and paper strips to the collage.

Day 3: Land, plants and seeds

Encourage people to place pebbles, stones, leaves, seeds and flowers on the collage.

Day 4: Sun, moon and stars

Group members should scatter handfuls of sequins and stars across the fabric.

Day 5: Fish and birds

At this stage group members can add feathers and pictures of birds and fish. They may also want to use some of the play dough to make a small model of one of these creatures.

Day 6: Animals and humans

Add the remaining pictures of people and animals. Those who want to can make figures from dough or add their own thumbprint in a piece of dough.

Day 7: Rest

This final 'stage' completes the creation story.

In a society where busy-ness prevails and people work longer and longer hours there is a crucial lesson for us to learn through the creation story. Presumably God could have continued creating indefinitely and yet there is contentment in the rest that is taken on the seventh day. God stops work because there is already and abundance of good things. What does it mean for us to acknowledge what we already have as abundance and learn to be content with that rather than strive for more and more?

Stand or sit together around the edge of the collage.

Pray together:

- Thank God for the abundance of creation.
- Seek God's help to be content to 'rest' and not continually strive for more.