



God Meets Us in Creation: Song of Praise

Session 1

Psalm 148

Main Idea

We join with all creation in joyful praise of God! We find God in creation, and express the ideas of this psalm in our experience.

Catechism Question

Question 46. Why do we pray to God? Because we were created to live with God, who desires the prayers of our hearts. Our hearts long for God, for we need God's help and guidance every day.

—*Belonging to God: A First Catechism*

Background for Teachers

Welcome to a new year of *We Believe!* We begin this fall quarter with a jubilant song of praise, Psalm 148. In this psalm, we are reminded that God is the creator of all, that God has put in place laws to govern the universe, and that God is unique.

It is worth noting that different Bible versions have some differences in wording. The differences are minor, but they open up possibilities for interpretation and imagination.

In verse 7, “sea monsters” or “sea creatures,” depending on your Bible version, are mentioned. In the Bible, the word *monsters* is often interpreted as a symbolic reference to the chaos outside the known world. In the ancient

world, people had a different understanding of the universe and its origins. The term *creatures* implies real ocean animals rather than mythic “monsters.” Let the children interpret for themselves what seems meaningful!

Psalm 148 has a simple structure. Verses 1–6 call out to all creation in the heavens to praise the Lord. Verses 7–14 invite all creation on earth to praise.

Verse 13 points out that God’s “glory is above heaven and earth,” meaning that God created all that we know and then some. God exists beyond this world. Thus, God’s creation is not just about us and our world, but God lives and acts in God’s own terms.

Psalm 148 makes the theological point that not only did God create all that we know, but God also

controls the elements of creation.¹ Verse 6 claims that God “fixed their bounds,” reassuring that all things remain in their places, even the chaos beyond our sky and seas. Verse 8 notes that creation, even the unpredictable winds, are “fulfilling his command,” being

and functioning as God intends and not arbitrarily. Stating that God created the very elements of nature, especially the sun, moon, and stars (v. 3), contradicts the teachings of many of the religions practiced in the ancient world, which worshiped the elements themselves as gods. The natural elements—in fact, all of nature—are not God, but called into being, set forth, and sustained by God. Praise the Lord indeed!

Something to Remember

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for God commanded and they were created.

—Psalm 148:5

1. James Luther Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), pp. 444–445.

Lesson Plan	Activity	Intelligences	You Will Need
Assemble	♥ Welcome		Prepared Resource 01 (Attendance Chart), offering basket or envelope (<i>optional</i>)
	♥ Creation Pictures	Picture	Markers or crayons, 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, 9" x 12" construction paper in assorted bright colors, glue sticks
	How Many?	Number	Prepared jar with 150 pieces of small candy (or cereal or small crackers), copies of Resource 02 (How Many?), pens or pencils
Bible Study	♥ Songs of Praise	Word	Bibles; chalkboard, dry-erase board, or newsprint; chalk, dry-erase marker, or marker
	How Many Psalms?	Number	Prepared jar with candy, cereal, or crackers; Resource 02 (How Many?) from Assemble; hand sanitizer (<i>optional</i>); small paper plates
	♥ Psalm 148	Word	Poster 02 (Psalm 148)
Claim	♥ Creation Name Game	People	Creation pictures from Assemble
	♥ Choose an Activity:		
	Act Out the Psalm	Body, People	No materials needed
	Praise Litany	Word, People	No materials needed
	The Lord Is Great!	Music, Body	Prepared newsprint with words to "The Lord Is Great!" (no. 113 in <i>LifeSongs Leader Book</i>); <i>LifeSongs Leader Book</i> , <i>LifeSongs</i> CD Vol. 1, CD player
Depart	♥ Remembering and Sending Out	Word, People, Body	Poster 01 (Catechism Questions 46 and 47); prepared cards from Resource 03 (S2R Cards, Session 1) for each child; Resource 04 (S2R Picture, Session 1) (<i>optional</i>); copy of For the Home 01 for each child unless e-mailing it to their homes



The Heart of the Lesson: The heart symbol shows you those parts of the session that carry you through the "heart of the lesson." Choose other activities as you prefer.



The Resource CD: Find Resources, MP3 files for music, Song Sheets, For the Home, Consider the Season, and Bonus Materials on the Resource CD.

Assemble: God Calls Us Together

♥ Welcome

This is the first session of the new church-school year, so today's activities will focus on learning names and having the class interact as a group. As children and parents or caregivers arrive, orient them to any sign-in, attendance, and offering procedures you may have.

♥ Creation Pictures

As you welcome each child, invite them to draw and color on a sheet of white paper a simple picture of anything in creation that starts with the same letter as their name. Creation includes animals, plants, weather, and inanimate elements (sun, moon, stars, rocks, mountains, waves). Have them glue the picture to a piece of construction paper to create a colored frame around the picture.

Teaching Tip

Having at least two teachers present will greatly help for a smooth class start; one teacher can welcome the children while the other leads an activity.

As the children work, ask cheerful getting-to-know-you questions and help children make connections, such as common schools or activities. Make a picture for yourself as well, using the letter of the name the children should use to address you. For example, Miss Jenny could draw a jellyfish, or Mrs. Smith could draw a sun. Set the pictures aside until Claim.

How Many?

Display the prepared jar and the chart on Resource 02 (How Many?). Invite the children to write their name and guess for the number of items in the jar. If possible, have two or three children at the jar at a time to encourage getting-to-know-you conversation. The answer will be revealed later in the session!

Bible Study: We Hear God's Word

Songs of Praise

Have the children get a Bible and sit at a table or in a circle together. Explain that during the fall they will learn about how people first worshiped God and how we worship God today. Ask the children the questions found in the margin to get them thinking about the psalms. Do not tell them that they will be looking at Psalm 148 yet. Write their answers on the board or newsprint. Encourage the children to use their Bibles to figure out some of the answers.

How Many Psalms?

Ask the children if anyone knows how many psalms are in the book of Psalms. Tell them that they can find out by counting the number of candies, cereal, or crackers in the jar. Have the children wash or sanitize their hands before handling food. Give each child a paper plate. Put an approximately equal portion of candy, cereal, or crackers from the jar on each plate and ask the children to count their items. As each child calls out his or her count, write it on the board or newsprint as a column addition problem. Let the class work together to find the final sum, which should be 150! Check the completed chart on Resource 02 (How Many?) and congratulate the child with the closest guess. Let the children eat and enjoy their snack.

Psalm 148

Have the children return to their Bibles and instruct them to find Psalm 148. Pray the following prayer, or one like it:

Prayer for Illumination

Awesome God, may our voices join in the song of all creation as it praises you, O God, our Creator. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Psalm Questions

- What are psalms? (*poetry, songs, prayers*)
- Where do we find the psalms? (*book of Psalms, center of the Bible, hymnal*)
- Why do we use psalms? (*prayer, worship, and praise*)
- How many psalms are in the book of Psalms? (*150*)

Note: Do not ask this question if you plan to do the "How Many Psalms?" activity.

Choose one of the following ways to read the psalm aloud:

- Ask for volunteers to read two verses at a time.
- Alternate odd and even verses between boys and girls.
- Alternate odd and even verses between you and the children.

Teaching Tip

Allow the children to ask any questions they may have. Allow other children an opportunity to respond before you respond. It is all right to say that you don't have an answer to a question. Acknowledge the question as good and let the children know that you will seek an answer or that they may want to ask another adult.

After reading Psalm 148, engage the children in conversation about the psalm using the following questions. Write their answers on the board or newsprint:

Conversation Starters

- ? What is this psalm about?
- ? What one word or short phrase could summarize this psalm?
- ? What or who is supposed to praise God?
- ? Take a closer look at the psalm. It has two parts, verses 1–6 and verses 7–14. What difference do you see between the two parts?
- ? Why does the psalm say we should praise God? (*See vv. 5, 6, 8 for possible answers*)

Show the children Poster 02 (Psalm 148) and display it in the room. Ask them to imagine and share how the different elements of creation might show joy to their Creator.

Claim: We Respond to God's Word

Creation Name Game

Invite the children to bring their creation pictures from Assemble and gather in a circle. All teachers should also be in the circle with their pictures. Since this is the first class of the year, this activity provides opportunity to learn names and build the group in the context of the theme of creation.

Introduce the Creation Name Game by telling them that they are going to hear about the wonderful parts of God's creation, including themselves. Explain how the game is played: Starting with you, each person will hold up their picture and say, *My name is (person's name), and God created (the subject of their picture)!* As you go around the circle, each person in turn will also name all the previous people and their pictures. The last person in the circle will get to say all the names and picture descriptions.

Set aside the pictures for use in Depart. If you have a display space, keep the children's creation pictures and display them for a few weeks. If not, have the children take them home.

Teaching Tip

You can help the comfort level of particularly shy children by having them play near the beginning of the game, so that they will not have so much to say. A particularly gregarious child will do best toward the end of the circle, where he or she will get to perform and speak more. Toward the end of a big circle, try to speed up the pace. At the end, everyone cheer!



Choose from the following three activities as time permits:

Act Out the Psalm

See the list of items in the margin. Assign items to individual children or groups of two (children or groups may have more than one item), depending on the size of your class:

Ask each child or group to create quickly, in two minutes, a simple movement for the item(s) assigned. Read Psalm 148 aloud, pausing at appropriate points for the action to be displayed, and for laughter!

Praise Litany

Ask each child to think of something in creation that could praise God. They may recall something from Psalm 148 or their creation pictures, or they may think of something new. Practice saying together joyfully, Praise the Lord! Use a cue, such as a clap, to signal when to say the Praise the Lord! phrase in unison. The litany will go around the group to hear each person's part of creation. Say Praise the Lord! together at the beginning of the litany, after each person names his or her part of creation as you go around the circle, and at the end of the litany. Encourage the children to be enthusiastic!

The Lord Is Great!

Direct the children's attention to the newsprint you have prepared and displayed with the words to The Lord Is Great! Have them listen to the song (Tracks 20 and 44 from *LifeSongs* CD Vol. 1). Invite the children to sing the song two times along with either the vocal track (Track 20) or the instrumental track (Track 44). Teach the children the motions for the words *beasts*, *bird*, *fish*, and *me*, found in the sidebar on page 113 of the *LifeSongs Leader Book*. Sing the song again with the motions.

Depart: God Sends Us into the World



Remembering and Sending Out

Gather the children together for a closing ritual involving introducing the Catechism Question, the Something to Remember verse, and Passing the Peace.

Catechism Question

Direct the children's attention to Poster 01 (Catechism Questions 46 and 47). Explain that a catechism is an organized way of asking questions and giving answers to learn about a subject. In the church, we use catechisms with questions and answers to help us learn about



Act Out the Psalm

- Angels
- Sun
- Moon
- Stars
- Sea monsters
- Fire
- Hail
- Snow
- Frost
- Wind
- Mountains
- Hills
- Trees
- Wild animals
- Cattle
- Creeping things
- Birds
- Kings
- Old people
- Young people





Teaching Tip

You may want to use the Something to Remember Bible verses and catechism questions as memory tools. Have the children memorize them throughout the quarter, offering incentives and rewards along the way. You may design this activity as you please.

our faith. Ask for a volunteer to read the catechism questions from Poster 01 (Catechism Questions 46 and 47). Have the class read the answers in unison.

Something to Remember

Give each child a card prepared from Resource 03 (S2R Cards, Session 1). If you are using Resource 04 (S2R Picture, Session 1) point it out to the children and tell them that you will add a verse each week. Ask for another volunteer to read the Something to Remember verse. Have the reader announce the verse and read it aloud, with the class repeating it.

Peace Pass

End the class with a ritual of your choice for Passing the Peace, continuing it through the whole quarter. Use one of the following ideas or create something that suits the personality of your class:

- Have the children gather in a circle and pile their right hands on top of one another in the middle of the group, down low. Say, Peace be with you. Have the children respond, And also with you! while throwing hands in the air. Cheer!
- Have the children form two lines facing each other, or one circle inside the other, facing opposite directions. Instruct the lines walk past each other, giving high fives and saying peace! (This is similar to what sports teams do after a game.)
- Have the children form a circle, cross right arms over left, and join hands. Say, Go now in peace, and have the group respond, to love and serve the Lord! Have the children raise their hands together, and the circle will rotate from facing inward to facing outward. This will only work if all the arms are right over left!

Evaluate

Think about the children in your class today. What did they enjoy most? How did they interact with you and with each other? As you get to know your class, you will be better able to choose lesson options that best suit them or challenge them!

Future

In the next session the children will make an Ark of the Covenant together. The Ark will be used throughout the quarter. Read Resource 05 (Make Your Own Ark: Directions) and Resource 06 (Make Your Own Ark: Supplies) to gather materials and see how the Ark will be made. You may also enjoy taking some time this week to research the Ark of the Covenant in a library or online. There's a lot of art, history, and mystery about the Ark that's fun to investigate!



Send home with each child:

- Creation pictures (unless you are displaying them)
- Prepared card from Resource 03 (S2R Cards, Session 1)
- Copy of For the Home 01, if not e-mailed home