

Lesson 1: It's a Beautiful World!

Key Concepts

1. God made light, the sun, moon, and stars, land and water.
2. We read about Creation in the Bible.

Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Examine the display table.
2. Introduce themselves to their classmates.
3. Discuss personal, happy experiences.
4. Listen to the story of God's Creation.
5. Retell the story of Creation.
6. Start learning *Jashagestzook*, the prayer before meals.
7. Describe ways in which they enjoy God's world.
8. Recite the first verse of *Aravod Looso* (Morning of Light) in English.
9. Participate in a movement activity.

Materials Needed

1. On the display table, place the following suggested items:
magnifying glass, seashells, sand, rocks, a globe, cut-out shapes of the moon, sun, stars, etc., some books about the moon and the stars.
2. Pre-prepared sun-shaped yellow name tags with the child's name on one side; yellow crepe paper streamers each 12"-15" in length (two for each student); large yellow circle (the sun).
3. A Children's Bible with colorful illustrations.
4. Small yellow circle and white ones in a paper bag for activity in procedure #10.
5. Optional: A felt board with Bible story characters and elements.

Background for the Teacher

St. Nersess Shnorhali (1102-1173) was a great leader of the Armenian Church who became Catholicos in 1166. He was also a musician. He wrote many hymns; one of these is *Aravod Looso* which contains 38 verses, each starting with a different letter of the Armenian alphabet. He was a renowned poet and author of prayers, as well, such as the 24-verse *Havadov Khosdovanim* (I Confess with Faith), one verse of which is "Jesus Wisdom of the Father."

Procedure

1. Welcome children warmly and direct them to the display table. Encourage them to handle and look at the objects carefully, utilizing the magnifying glass. Stand to say the opening prayer together. 5 min.
2. Direct the children to the story corner. Say: "Tell your classmates your name as I put a name tag around your neck." After all of the children have said their names, say: "You saw a lot of things on our table this morning. Based on what you saw, what do you think our lesson will be about today?" 5 min.
3. Stand to say the opening prayer together. Then ask children to look at the picture of a child sitting up in bed. Begin by asking the opening questions in *Our Life Together*. Finish reading the paragraph. Ask: "Where have you seen people with smiling and happy faces? What were they doing?" Discuss these questions and the photos with your students. 5 min.

4. Show the children where the story of Creation appears in the Bible. Say: “At the very beginning of the Bible is a story about how God created our wonderful earth and all of the living things on it. Look at the picture in your lesson of the big, round white moon.” Read *God’s Word to Us*. 5 min.
5. Say, “I am going to read the creation story again (*God’s Word To Us*). This time I am going to ask you to help me. When I give you this signal (touch your hand to your lips) say the words – ‘*God saw that it was good and he smiled.*’” Ask the children to repeat this sentence a few times for practice. Remind them: “When I give you the signal, you will say, ‘God saw that it was good and he smiled.’” Begin to read, “In the beginning there was deep darkness everywhere...”
6. After you have finished, say: “You have just performed the creation story. What did God create for us?” If you have a felt board, use it at this time to review the story. 5 min.
7. Snack. Ask the children to join you at the table. Say: “Every Sunday, before we eat our snack, we are going to recite the *Prayer Before Meals (Jashagestzook)* in English. Today, I will recite it in English and Armenian.” Begin to teach the first line of the prayer in English. For example, say: “Today I would like you to learn the first line of the *Prayer Before Meals*: ‘Let us in peace eat this meal.’” Then you recite the same line in Armenian: “*Jashagestzook khaghaghootyamp uzgeragoorus.*” The children will not be memorizing the prayer in Armenian at this time, but they should gradually become familiar with it. Encourage them to do some of the serving and pouring and participate in the clean-up. 10 min.
8. Remain at the table. Say: “Please look at the page where you see children and grown-ups enjoying the outdoors.” Begin to read *We Learn About God*, stopping to ask the children to name some things they like to do in the sun. 5 min.
9. Now direct children’s attention to the picture of a saintly man writing. Read the passage from *Our Armenian Way* about St. Nersess Shnorhali (the Grace-filled) and the hymn that he wrote.
10. *Movement activity*: Say: “Please look at the beautiful, big, round sun in your lesson. We are going to learn the words to the hymn, *Morning of Light*, called *Aravod Looso* in Armenian, a hymn written by St. Nersess Shnorhali.”
 Ask the children to stand. Say: “We are going to learn the first two words of the song in Armenian. Repeat these words after me – *Aravod Looso* – which means morning of light.” Begin to teach the paraphrased translation of the Armenian words into English. Say: “Repeat each line after me.” Continue this routine a few times until the children become familiar with the words.
 Ask the children to go to an area of the room to begin the movement activity. Say: “Now that we know the words to the song, we are going to recite the words as we begin to move around the room. One of you will be the sun. The rest of you will be the rays of the sun, making everything shiny and bright.”
 “I am going to pass around a bag with paper circles in it. Whoever picks the yellow circle will be the sun.” The child portraying the sun should hold a large yellow circle, while the other children hold yellow streamers, one in each hand. If there is time, the children should just walk around the first time, repeating the word *looyis* (light). (If there is not enough time, go directly to the song.) The second time, they should say or sing, with your help, the English verse of *Aravod Looso* as they perform the actions below:

Line 1 – The children are all kneeling on the rug. Tap the sun to stand; the others will follow as if they were waking up. They begin the hymn – *The sun greets me at dawn.*

Line 2 – The children, waving their streamers, walk freely around the room, moving with the sun. While moving, they say: *It shines upon the earth.*

Line 3 – In loud voices, they will all say the last line, *Light is everywhere*. When the activity is over, collect the circle and the streamers. Say: “Let us go to the story corner for a very special story.” 10 min.

11. Story Time: “Mary and Joseph”

After discussing the story questions, conclude: “Yes, and now that an angel has told Joseph Jesus would save the world, he and Mary waited for this great blessing.”

12. Dismissal. 10 min.

Lesson 2: Come to My Garden

Key Concepts

1. Flowers, plants and trees are God’s gifts to us.
2. We are the caretakers of the earth.

Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Examine the display table.
2. Listen to a story about a grandmother’s special meal.
3. Explain why the meal was so special.
4. Brainstorm ways to care for the earth.
5. Draw a picture of a garden.
6. Describe, with help, the *Antasdan* service.
7. Participate in an *Antasdan* service.

Materials Needed

1. On the display table, place the ceremonial cross (*Background for Teacher*); a bouquet of flowers; a rose; flower and/or vegetable seeds; magnifying glass; fresh basil (enough to give each child a leaf, a sprig or two); a few string beans.
2. For each child: white or manila construction paper (9"x12"), crayons, four different colored tissue paper circles 2"-3" in diameter to make flowers.
3. A Children’s Bible.

Background for Teacher

The Blessing of the Field (*Antasdan*)

In earlier times, this service was performed outdoors. Today it is performed mostly in churches. As a symbol for the four directions of the world, the east, west, north and south corners of the church are blessed by the priest who prays for abundance of crops and protection against natural disasters. Prayers are also requested for churches, cities, villages, the Catholicos, Armenia, the priests and for the people.

Prepare a simple processional cross to use during the *Antasdan* service which you will conduct outdoors (if the weather permits) or indoors. You can cut out an Armenian cross (at least 8" high). Tape it to a stick or ruler and tie some basil around the base of the cross. (Basil is a pungent, sweet-smelling herb, and is a symbol of royalty. Its name comes from the ancient Greek word *basilikos* meaning “royal.” You can wrap the cross and the stick in foil.