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See the Image of God in All

GENESIS 1:27



GOAL

Children seek new and expansive images for God and, in doing so, see the wide diversity of humanity.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God, give us grace for all the ways we have denied the image of God in our neighbors. Grow us so we might honor all people, and no one is left out. Amen.

THIS SESSION

God calls us beyond just valuing diversity. Honor God's diversity means noticing who has been pushed to the margins of society; noticing the *them* that we do not include in our *us*. Once we can see the marginalized, then the Spirit of God guides us in widening the ways of our communities and including those we've left out. The image of God is present and alive in everyone. Our view of everyone changes when we see the image of God in all.

THE BIBLE STORY

It is amazing how much richness and liberation there is in this one biblical verse from Genesis 1:27. The archaic use of *man* at the beginning of the verse is a stand-in for humankind. The end, however, comes into tension with this singular noun by specifically naming a plural pronoun, *them*. All are created in God's image. The blessing of this text is that, in this tension, we find understanding: God is in all of it. Genesis 1:27 doesn't give us any room to exclude anyone from the *imago Dei*. God's image is alive in the entire human spectrum.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children start to understand group identity and inclusion from a very early age. It is so important that we talk intentionally with children about difference and God's call that we honor diversity. Systematic racism may not be apparent to children, but if no one talks with them about our differences, then the inherent racism and other *isms* of our culture become one of their defining tools, and diversity is not honored. Pay attention to your ways of talking about God. Is it limited, or do you try to reflect the true expansiveness of a God that surpasses our categorization? Diversify the way you talk about God to model that God is known in many ways.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- "All the Hands before Yours" (p. 9): Gather several toys and items of clothing with "Made in . . ." labels or designations. For an optional snack, obtain several fruits or other food items with labels or packaging that say, "Grown in . . ." or "Made in . . ." Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.
- "Words about God Data" (p. 10): Gather copies of a worship bulletin and hymnbooks and/or obtain a video recording of a worship service from your church. Prepare a sheet of newsprint with the heading: "God as . . ." and a chart listing the following categories down the left side: king or ruler, creator, father, mother, he, she, Spirit, Jesus, powerful, loving, and referred to in a different way.



GETTING STARTED

- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- 11" x 17" paper
- Markers and pens

IMAGES OF GOD EVERYWHERE

A C

As the children arrive, have them look through the magazines and cut out the silliest thing they can find and four or five images that remind them of God. Invite them to make a collage by gluing their pictures on a piece of paper. Partner the children and have them share their silliest image and one of their God images with each other. Have the children change partners and have another quick conversation about their images.

CELEBRATING GOD'S DIVERSITY

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Invite the children to respond with suggestions as prompted, highlighting God's diversity in creation and in us. Let the group know when they will respond individually and as a group. Use the following pattern:

God made (*name an item of creation, such as the moon or mountains, or a particular body of water or land form, or a particular plant or animal*).

Let's describe (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*Invite people to take turns describing the item of creation named above.*)

Thank you, God, for (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*One person at a time, lead this part of the litany.*)

(*Name*), you are made in God's image.

(*Invite the named person to say a sentence that describes something about themselves, such as "I am tall," or "I have green eyes," or "I like to draw."*)

Thank you, God, for (*name of person named above*).



Example:

God made the sun.

Let's describe the sun.

It's big. It's hot. It makes me sweaty.

Thank you, God, for the sun.

Rosie, you are made in God's image.

I have curly hair.

Thank you, God, for Rosie.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

IMAGES OF GOD IN EVERYONE

AM G D

Gather the children in a circle. Tell the children that, just as they found images in magazines that reminded them of God, the image of God can be found in each one of them and in everyone they meet! There is something in everyone that reminds us of God, just like the pictures in their collages. To help the children remember that everyone is created in God's image no matter what they do, they are going to be silly. Invite a volunteer to stand or remain seated as they choose, say their name, and do the silliest thing that comes to mind. Have the rest of the children respond, "(*Name*), the image of God is in you!" Continue, encouraging the children to take turns with their introductions and silly moves. If a child feels shy or doesn't want to move, invite them to say a silly word. You may want to give a few examples for them to choose from if they are stuck. Be sure and do a silly move yourself!



To extend the activity, invite the children to choose a person they know or know about and describe that person. Have the children respond, "The image of God is in (*Name*)."



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

TALKING ABOUT GOD

C

The way that we refer to God, even in the smallest ways, shapes the image we have of God and shapes the image of who gets included in the image of God. Ask the children to explain *pronouns* or give examples of pronouns. Ask the children what pronouns they have heard used for God. Tell the children that today’s Bible passage is just one verse. Explain that it is part of the story of creation. Invite the children to listen for which pronouns are used for God.

This next part requires a little bit of performance on your part as the leader. Look at Resource Page 1 and act confused. Tell the children that there are eight versions of the verse provided and you aren’t sure which one is best. Ask a volunteer to give you a number between 1 and 7. (You will read #8 last.) Read that version of the passage from the list on Resource Page 1 and ask the children which pronoun they heard. Continue in the same manner until versions 1–7 have been read.

After you’ve read versions 1–7, ask the children:

- Which version do you think is used in most Bibles? (*number 5, which uses he and his*)
- Which version do you think is the most true about God?
- Do you think God is male, female, neither, or both? Singular or plural?

Explain that God is really all genders and beyond gender, meaning that the language we use for God is our way of using words for God, but God is much bigger than our words could ever imagine. Comment that the Bible uses lots of imagery for God, including an eagle, a bear, a fortress, a rock, a mother, and a father. God is all of these and not limited to these images. Read version 8 from the Resource Page and tell the children that everyone is created in God’s image, and the image of God is big enough to include everyone.

Resource Page 1



Pronouns are a short way to refer to someone without having to use their name all the time. The most basic pronouns are *I, we, you, she, he, it, and they*.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

ALL THE HANDS BEFORE YOURS

C F X

Tell the children that we often play with toys, wear clothes, and eat food, enjoying them but not thinking about who made, prepared, or cultivated the items we use. *Honor God’s Diversity* means remembering all the people from all over the world who work hard so we can enjoy the things we love.

Provide the toys and clothing you have gathered and ask the children to find a label, sticker, or some sort of designation that will tell where the item was made. When a location is found, have the child write or draw a picture of that item on a small sticky note along with the country where it was made. Assist with writing as needed. Help the children find the countries on the world map or globe and have them place their sticky note on the country.

- Toys and clothes with “Made in . . .” labels, stickers, or designations
- Fruits and/or other food items with “Grown in . . .” or “Made in . . .” labels or packaging to have as a snack (optional)
- Small sticky notes, markers
- World map or globe



If you choose to have a snack, show the labels or packaging from the fruit or food items and add sticky notes to the world map or globe for those items.

Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.

- Copies of a worship bulletin and hymnbooks from your church and/or video recording of a worship service from your church and internet-connected device
- Prepared newsprint and marker



You may want to assign children to listen specifically for certain categories, particularly if you have a large number of children.

Invite the children to think about all the people who had a hand in the things they use or eat every day before it ever gets to them. Wonder who they might be: farmers, factory workers, dock workers, sailors, pilots, truck drivers, store clerks, grocery workers, and so forth. Encourage the children to remember all the people, each created in the image of God, all over the world. Offer the following prayer, or one of your own choosing:

God of all, thank you for all the people who have worked to produce the things that make our everyday lives possible. May we always remember that they are made in your image. Amen.

WORDS ABOUT GOD DATA



Tell the children that they have a special assignment: collect data regarding words about God. Explain that different faith communities talk about God in different ways, and they are going to be data collectors to see how your faith community talks, sings, prays, and uses images about God. Display and review the newsprint you have prepared with the categories for how God might be depicted in your worship service. Use parts of the worship service since you won't have time for an entire service. Consider at least the Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon, a hymn, and a Scripture reading.

Invite the children to raise their hands when they hear a word or image used for God or that describes God as you pause and make a tally mark on the newsprint in that category. Distribute copies of a worship bulletin and hymnbooks and have children take turns volunteering to read different parts of worship and the words to a hymn, or show the parts of a video recording.

Once you have gathered your data, turn it into a bar graph, making the far right side the highest number of tally marks and dividing the rest of the space evenly. Color in the space by each category to visualize the number of tally marks. As you are making the bar graph, wonder what words or images about God were new to the children. Ask the children what they notice with the following questions:

- ✦ What does the bar graph say about how our congregation talks about God?
- ✦ What words or images are used a lot?
- ✦ What words or images aren't used at all?
- ✦ How do you think the graph fits with how we understand God?
- ✦ What do you think we need to do about this?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Strips cut from Resource Page 2
- Long rope or painter's tape

CENTRAL COMMAND



Play a game to introduce or reinforce the concept of those inside and outside the circle and how some people are left out or on the margins. Have the children help you use rope or tape to create a circle on the floor that is big enough for everyone to stand inside it. Once the circle is made, have the children stand outside the circle.

Explain that they are going to play a game and pretend that they are intergalactic explorers; the circle is a protective force field on a new and distant planet. Give them the following information:

- Central Command has sent them to the farthest reaches of the galaxy to explore this uncharted planet, and it might be dangerous.
- There is a special force field that Central Command set up on the planet and a few sporadic transmissions about who can go through the force field for safety.
- Everything is so unknown about the planet that Central Command keeps changing whom the force field can protect. When Central Command sends a new transmission, the force field changes, and the explorers must move inside or outside the force field according to the new transmission.

Invite a volunteer to be in the “orbiter module” and go to a far corner of the room so they cannot see the circle or hear the command. Explain that they will guess what the command transmission is.

Give a transmission from Central Command (a strip cut from Resource Page 2, in order as they are numbered) to one of the children to show or whisper to the other children. Have the children follow the instructions; those who fit the command stand in the circle with the rest outside the circle. Have the child in the orbiter module come back and guess what the command was based on how the other children are organized. Some commands may be about appearance while others may not be so obvious. They may ask yes and no questions to try and figure out what the force field is protecting. Give clues if the guesser needs assistance.

Continue the game with another volunteer in the orbiter module. The last transmission is the one that says that all are created in God’s image. After the child in the orbiter module guesses, have the children sit in a circle and reflect on the game using the following questions:

- ➔ What did it feel like to get to go inside the protective force field? What about when you were left outside of it?
- ➔ What was it like to have the force field keep changing about who was in and who was out?
- ➔ Who might be people today who feel protected inside an invisible force field? Who might be people who feel left out?
- ➔ What do you think you can do to see everyone as a person created in God’s image?

DRAW THE CIRCLE WIDER

Provide the children with paper and markers, crayons, and colored pencils, including multicultural drawing supplies. Tell them that they are going to draw a number of circles, getting bigger and bigger. Explain that there will be lots of people to draw, and they will need to draw quickly, but they can take their pictures home and add to them later if there isn’t enough time. Use the instructions on Resource Page 3 to guide the children. As the children draw in each circle, invite conversation about who is in those circles.



Instead of using the strips from Resource Page 2, use a fun tech alternative and have one leader text another leader each command from Resource Page 2. Show the children the texted transmission from Central Command.



- 11" x 17" (or larger) paper for each child
- Markers, crayons, and colored pencils, including multicultural drawing supplies
- Resource Page 3



FOLLOWING JESUS

Internet-connected device



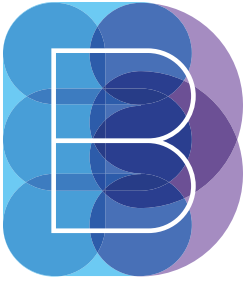
The song “Draw the Circle Wide” with a different video will be used in each session so that the children will have the chance to learn the verses.

GOD’S CIRCLE



Tell the children that God always draws the widest circle, including everyone all the time, because everyone is created in the image of God no matter how different from us they may seem. Remind the children that the image of God is bigger than we could ever understand, and so the ways we talk about God need to reflect the diversity that is alive in who God is.

Show the YouTube video “MV 145 Draw the Circle Wide” ([bit.ly /FMDrawCircle](https://bit.ly/FMDrawCircle), 2:53) and invite the children to sing along, especially with the chorus as it becomes familiar.



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON GENESIS 1:27

1. (*first-person singular*) So God created humankind in my image, in the image of God I created them; all humans I created them.
2. (*first-person plural*) So God created humankind in our image, in the image of God we created them; all humans we created them.
3. (*second-person*) So God created humankind in your image, in the image of God you created them; all humans you created them.
4. (*third-person feminine*) So God created humankind in her image, in the image of God she created them; all humans she created them.
5. (*third-person masculine*) So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; all humans he created them.
6. (*third-person neuter*) So God created humankind in its image, in the image of God it created them; all humans it created them.
7. (*third-person plural*) So God created humankind in their image, in the image of God they created them; all humans they created them.
8. (*no pronouns*) So God created humankind in God's own image, in the image of the Divine, the Creator created them, all humans the Maker created them.

1 The force field protects explorers who have shoes that have shoelaces.



2 The force field protects explorers who have curly hair.



3 The force field protects explorers who are wearing red.



4 The force field protects explorers who like broccoli.



5 The force field protects explorers who have blue eyes.



6 The force field protects explorers who have short hair above chin length.



7 The force field protects explorers who are wearing a dress or skirt.



8 The force field protects explorers who play a musical instrument.



9 The force field protects explorers who are wearing black or gray.



10 The force field is not needed, for all is God's creation and you are all created in God's image. Remove the force field so there is no inside or outside.



Instructions for “Draw the Circle Wider” (p. 11)

1. Draw a small circle in the center of your paper, about the size of a quarter, and draw your face in it.
2. Draw a circle around that circle, not too big because there are many more circles to add. Draw the faces of all the people who live in your house with you.
3. Draw a wider circle around your house faces and draw the faces of your family who don't live in your home.
4. Draw a wider circle around your family circle and draw pictures of your friends.
5. Draw an even wider circle around your friends' circle and draw pictures of your neighbors, even if you don't know their names.
6. Draw another circle around your neighbors' circle and draw all the community helpers you can think of, such as postal workers, maintenance workers and landscapers, emergency workers, garbage collectors, teachers, pastors, librarians, firefighters, police officers, nurses, doctors, hospital workers, and more!
7. Draw another circle around all the community helpers and draw people who grow and make the food you eat, make clothes you wear, and make the toys you play with.
8. Draw one more circle around the makers' circle and draw as many faces as you can imagine from around the world.
9. Draw the final circle around the people of the world and write, “The image of God is in all of us.”

