

**SERIOUS
PLAY**

3-5s











Leader's manual

SP1

Who is God? Who is Jesus?

From Genesis and Matthew

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Serious play

How it works

How the sessions are structured

Bible passage: All sessions are Bible-focused

Aim

This is the 'big idea' to be taught during this session. It is child-oriented.

Outcomes

These statements break down the aim into 'do-able' chunks. There are generally only three, so that the leader can keep them in mind and check up later whether or not they were achieved. They are broken up into:

- knowledge – information, concepts, beliefs
- understanding – more personal ways of grasping the concepts in the session
- life application – ways of making links between knowledge and children's lives, and reflecting on what kind of change might happen in response to God's word.

Memory verse

This verse will generally be based on the CEV Bible and will be taught during the session.

Notes

These notes for the leader give Bible context and background. There are hints regarding the theology of the passage, where it fits in salvation history and how it may properly be applied to both leader and child. There might also be comments about the management of the session content and special comments when needed about visual aids and activities.

Leader's prayer

This section links to the aim and outcomes, mentioning the way this session will actually call for a response from the child and make a difference in their lives.

Gear

A summary is given at the beginning of the session of all the equipment needed by the leader and when it will be used. Some items will be given as optional. The gear needed for the **Start up** and concluding **Activities** is given with the particular activity. Leaders should choose these in advance to ensure that they have all that is needed. It is advisable to try out any unfamiliar activity before the session to make sure it works.

Get ready

This section gives hints about important preparation to be done before the session starts.

Start up

During this time activities occur that introduce the theme, aim and ideas of the session. There may be a few activities to choose from. Each activity has a specified purpose.

Your choice of activities will often depend on the children in your group and the space available.

NOTE: Sometimes during **Bible focus** time there will be a special comment to the leader about an issue that may come up during the session.

Bible focus

Links



Links are made with the previous sessions.



Connections with life are raised and the children are encouraged to discuss 'real life' situations they face. We will raise the issue here and it will be drawn to a conclusion during **Bringing it together**.

Teaching time

This is the body of the session. It involves teaching and learning activities. For this youngest group the story time is usually presented first and activities done after to reinforce the main ideas raised by the story. The story time has as its central focus the explanation of the Bible text in an age-appropriate way so that the aim of the session is reached. The activities ensure that all the session outcomes are achieved.

What the leader actually says to the children is presented in bold text. Directions to the leader are in normal type.

In this part of the session the children are helped to understand the Bible. Concepts and activities are age-appropriate. The activities are designed to reinforce the Bible teaching by revising the main concepts and testing the children's recall.

Application is an important part of this section and it is done carefully, while being true to the passage and to the developmental needs of the children. At this youngest age group we are laying the foundations for further knowledge and understanding.

Regardless of the stage of their faith, they can be called on to respond and encouraged to know how God's word challenges them to love and trust Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.



This icon shows where in the session the Bible will be read to the children so they can listen to and interact with the word of God.



Music spot

Various songs, on readily available CDs, are suggested to link into the session and to provide a high-interest flow to the activities.

Think about it

Here the leader is encouraged to think through issues that occurred in the session and reflect on possible strategies for the future.

Bringing it together

This section is really important. The leader is encouraged to allow enough time for this as connections are discussed that impact the children's lives.

There may be open-ended questions that encourage children to respond in their own terms. We are aiming for honest responses from the children.

The Memory verse is often taught during this part of the session.

Prayer

This will normally follow **Bringing it together** and allows for the issues highlighted by the children to be prayed about. Leaders will model prayer and also teach children how to pray – both for themselves and for others, and for issues in the wider world.

Activities

After the more formal learning time the leader is encouraged to choose one or more of the activities included in each session as a way of reinforcing the main learning ideas and also allowing the children to interact with the adult leaders and also their fellow group members.

Munchies

Many of the sessions contain ideas for **Munchies** – food and drink that relate to the session for the children to enjoy. It is a good idea to check with parents for any allergies that their children might have before serving food and drink.

NOTE: The **Links** in each session help children to recall what they have already learned. Leaders may wish to include a reflective session also.

Think ahead

This is a very brief indication of what the leader will need to plan ahead for next session. It may involve equipment, people, and so on.



Who is God? Who is Jesus?

From Genesis and Matthew

Unit aim

To introduce the children to God, our Creator, and his Son, Jesus.

Unit outcomes

By the end of this unit the children will:

- know that God created the world and everything in it
- understand that God has always existed
- understand that Jesus is God's Son
- know that Jesus taught people about God
- know that Jesus died and came back to life again
- appreciate that we can be friends with God because Jesus died for us and rose again
- appreciate that God wants us to tell people about Jesus.

Memory verses

Sessions 1–4

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **Genesis 1:1 (CEV)**

Session 5

I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. **Psalms 139:14a (CEV)**

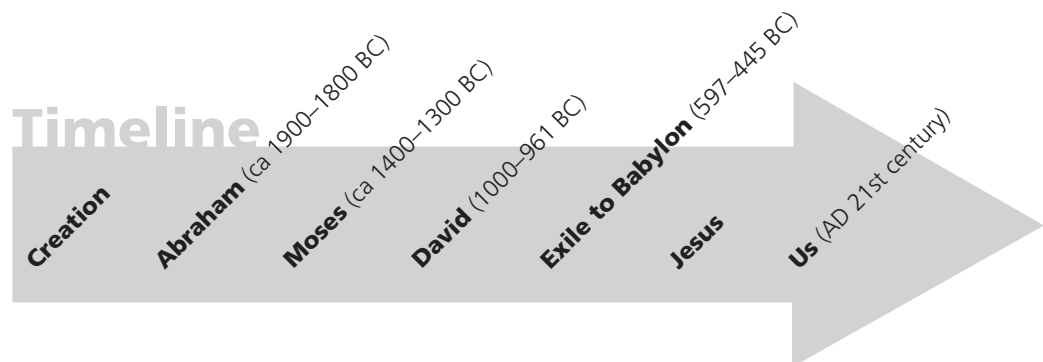
Sessions 6–8

[God said], 'This is my Son, and I love him. Listen to what he says!' **Mark 9:7b (CEV)**

Sessions 9,10

We believe that Jesus died and was raised to life. **1 Thessalonians 4:14a (CEV)**

Where this
fits in
the Bible



We encourage the children to understand that Jesus is the 'centre-piece' of God's plan and that we can also be part of the plan by having faith in Jesus ourselves.

Notes

Bible background

These ten sessions focus on who God is and what he has done for his people. The children are encouraged to hear what the Bible says about God's love for his people by considering his gift of creation, as well as the ultimate gift of his Son.

Sessions 1 to 5 look at the wonder of God's creation. Rather than present the events of creation on a day-by-day, chronological basis, these sessions show firstly that God has always existed and secondly that he created everything through his word (**Genesis 1**).

Sessions 6 to 10 focus on who Jesus is and what God has done for us through Jesus. Session 6 looks at Jesus' baptism and how this event revealed that Jesus is God's Son (**Matthew 3:17**). It also shows the children that Jesus always obeyed his Father, God, and this pleased God. Session 7 reveals that Jesus can be trusted. The children learn this concept by thinking about the account of Jesus healing two blind men (**Matthew 9:27–31**). They will also appreciate that Jesus could heal people because he has God's power. Through interacting with the parable of the great banquet during Session 8, the children will learn that Jesus invites us all to be God's friends and a part of his eternal kingdom (**Matthew 22**).

Sessions 9 and 10 focus on the Easter story, reinforcing that everything God does is good and right, and that Jesus dying for us is part of God's good plan (**Matthew 26:28**). The children will understand that Jesus is alive and be encouraged to practise telling others of this wonderful truth (**Matthew 28:1–10**).

Faith development

Children grow and develop physically, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually at different rates and in different ways. This unit aims to encourage growth in their knowledge of Jesus, the Son of God, for each child at his or her own pace. No matter what stage of their faith development, they can be challenged to respond to God in Christ and to live in the way he wants for us.

Faith has been described as having four aspects: believing, imagining, trusting and doing. (See *Children Finding Faith* by Francis Bridger, SU, England, 2000, available from CEP.) Believing involves having faith in the truth of the gospel and a reliance on the promises of God in Christ. Imagining involves creatively exploring our beliefs. Trusting involves the relational side of faith. Doing is the way we act as an outworking of our faith. Children, like

adults, benefit from learning approaches that involve exploring faith from each of these four aspects. These sessions have been written with this in mind.

Special features

The leader's pack includes:

- the **Leader's manual** of ten sessions
- a set of 10 full-colour A3 **Leader's posters**
- a sample of the set of 10 full-colour A5 **Children's posters**. Extra sets may be purchased from CEP so that every child has their own copy to work with in each session.
- a set of photocopiable masters
- a variety of Visual aids and activities for each session.

Leader's posters

Each session there is a **Leader's poster** displaying the theme of the Bible teaching. These posters are useful for reinforcing teaching, summarising and recalling past sessions, and creating a colourful timeline of learning. **Leader's posters 1–4** are designed to join together as a frieze by matching the blended background colours.

Children's component

Each session the children will receive a **Children's poster**. The children will make a **Big book** and each session will add one of the posters to the book. The books can be used as aids for revision throughout the unit. In the final session the children will be able to take home the books as a visual reminder of what they have learned.

Some suggestions for making the **Big books** are:

- Use an A4 display book with plastic inserts. If you choose this option, glue the posters onto sheets of A4 paper, follow the instruction in each of the **Big book** activities, then when the page is dry, slide it into one of the inserts.
- Purchase a cheap scrapbook for each child. Simply glue the posters straight onto the pages of the scrapbook.
- Make a book. Bind 12 A4 sheets of cardboard together with ribbon or staples. The front and back pages could be decorated as a cover, while the posters are stuck on the remaining pages.

Activities

Children all learn in a variety of ways. *Serious play* is for three to five year-olds who enjoy and learn through play, are either non-readers or beginning readers, and are active in the years before formal schooling. Because of this, the story-time component of **Bible focus** is kept short and to the point, and the main concepts of the Bible passages are then reinforced in the activities.

At this stage the children are beginning to learn how to relate to God through his word, the Bible, and also through prayer. It is important that the leaders model this behaviour and encourage the children to follow their example.

A Memory verse activity is included in each session and is presented in an interactive way so that the children will begin to build their own personal store of Bible verses.

Photocopiable masters

Photocopiable masters have also been included with most sessions to provide extra craft activities to reinforce key learning concepts or the Memory verse. The opportunity should be taken when helping the children with these activities to talk to them and learn more about each individual.

When choosing the activities you will include in each session, the number of children in your group, their individual skills and the space you have available will be important considerations. Try to encourage a wide range of activities so that the different learning skills of the children will be catered for.

Purchase of the **Leader's kit** entitles you to make one copy for each member of your group.



Music spot

The *Earth movers* CD has been especially developed by CEP for use with the 3–5 year old age group. On the CD are songs about God and his promises, movement music for dance, music to cue the children to come back to the leader and get ready to listen, music to 'get up and boogie' to, and music for popular games such as pass the parcel and musical chairs.

Often the music helps the children to remember the significant learning that has taken place in the session. You may make one copy only of the CD onto audio cassette for use in the context of your church. This CD is available separately from your *kids@church* supplier.

Each session recommends the song or songs from the *Earth movers* CD that are most appropriate for reinforcing the key concepts of the session or the unit as a whole.

Other children's CDs you may find useful are:

- *Promises, promises*, CEP
- *How cool is that*, Johnny Burns
- *10,9,8 ... God is great*, Colin Buchanan
- *Practise being Godly*, Colin Buchanan
- *Remember the Lord*, Colin Buchanan
- *Follow the Saviour*, Colin Buchanan
- *The King, the snake and the promise*, Emu Music
- *Lovely jubbly*, Doug Horley
- *Tomb Breaker*, CEP

These CDs are available from CEP.



The beginning

Genesis 1:1–5,14–18

Aim

To help the children to understand that God has always existed and is the Creator of all things.

Outcomes

By the end of this session the children will:

- know that God made day and night, as well as the sun, moon and stars
- understand that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit have always existed, even before the beginning of creation
- begin to appreciate the wonder, wisdom and creativity of God, the all-powerful Creator.

Memory verse

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **Genesis 1:1 (CEV)**

Notes

Read **Genesis 1:1–5,14–18**.

Genesis 1 begins by identifying God as the Creator of the 'heavens and the earth' (**Genesis 1:1**) rather than by proving his existence. There was never a time when God did not exist. As David stated in **Psalms 90**, 'You have always been God – long before the birth of the mountains, even before you created the earth and the world' (**Psalms 90:2**). Yet, for many people, including children, this is a difficult concept to grasp fully. God's omnipotence and divine creativity is really beyond our understanding.

The New Testament reveals that the plural 'we' used by God when humans were created, refers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see **John 1:3; 14:16,17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:3–5**). **Colossians 1:15–17** makes it clear that everything was created by Christ the Son and for him. The saving act of Jesus Christ is the supreme manifestation of God's glory (**Ephesians 1:3–14**).

Over the next five sessions the children will learn that the triune God is the ultimate Creator. He commanded order into a formless world. **Genesis 1** shows the fulfilment of God's commands: the sky, light bearers (sun, moon and stars), day and night,

and so on, were formed. God blessed his creations by naming them and commending them with the words, 'And it was good'. The final act of creation was mankind (**Genesis 1:26–31**). Males and females were made in the image and likeness of God. In surveying the completed work, God saw that it was 'very good' (**Genesis 1:31**).

Psalms 19:1 notes that the 'heavens keep telling the wonders of God', while **Psalms 96:11,12** says that the heavens, oceans, creatures and trees 'roar', 'rejoice' and 'sing joyful songs to the Lord'. As you and the children consider God's supreme wisdom, creativity and power, be encouraged to express wonder, awe and excitement about creation, just as the heavens and earth do. Allow yourself to look at God's world through the eyes of a child and recall the excitement that is so easy for a child to express.

Leader's prayer

Reflect on God's awesome power in creating the entire universe. Give praise and thanks for his creation. Pray that the children will be in awe of God and desire to know more of him.

Gear

- ❑ A CEV Bible marked at **Genesis 1:1**
- ❑ **Leader's poster 1**
- ❑ A sheet of silver or gold star stickers
- ❑ Four, 15 cm x 4 cm strips of blue cellophane taped together as 'dark glasses' for each child
- ❑ A 15 cm x 4 cm strip of yellow cellophane for 'light glasses' for each child
- ❑ *Earth movers* CD and CD player
- ❑ Gear for **Take home** and **Memory verse** activities
- ❑ Gear for chosen activities in **Start up** and **Activities** sections
- ❑ Food for **Munchies**

Get ready

Display **Leader's poster 1** in your area.

Think about how the children in your group will make their **Children's posters** into a **Big book** using the suggestions in the **Unit introduction** (page 7). Once you have decided, ensure that you organise the necessary materials.

Hang pictures of starry nights, sunrises and sunsets in your area. Alternatively, simply cut out star, sun and moon shapes from cardboard and attach them to the walls. Be as adventurous as you can with your budget, time and space. If possible, leave the display set up at the end of the session or set it up again each session. Add to the Creation scene over the next five sessions so the children can reflect on, explore and enjoy the different aspects of God's creation.

For extra impact

Darken the room by covering the windows with blue cellophane or drawing the curtains. Don't make it too dark or some children may become anxious.

Play music with a space theme as the children enter and begin the **Start up** activities.



Start up

Do **Darkness discovery** and **Shiny shapes**. Choose from the other activities as time permits. For future reference, tick the activities you choose.

Darkness discovery

Purpose: *To introduce the concept of darkness.*

Gear

- ❑ 'Dark glasses' for each child (see **Gear**)

As the children enter your area, give each child a pair of 'dark glasses'. Encourage the children to walk around and explore their environment in the 'dark'. Collect the 'dark glasses' to use during **Bible focus**.

Shiny shapes

Purpose: *To create a prop to be used in Bible focus.*

Gear

- ❑ A large sun, a large moon and smaller star shapes cut from cardboard
- ❑ Glue and paintbrushes
- ❑ Foil, glitter, pieces of yellow, blue, grey, silver and gold paper, or other decorative materials

Arrange the sun, moon and star shapes on a table with the appropriate collage materials. Divide the children into groups and ask them to decorate the shapes with the materials provided. To limit the amount of glue used, you may wish to brush the glue onto the shapes for the children. If you have a large group, place each shape on a separate table and allocate a group to each. The shapes will be used during **Bible focus**.

Sun, moon and stars

Purpose: *To introduce the concepts for Bible focus by playing a game.*

Gear

- ❑ *Earth movers* CD and CD player

- 🎧 Play **Jumping jelly beans**, track 15 of the *Earth movers* CD and encourage the children to jump and move around your area. Explain that they must freeze when the music stops and then mimic your actions in one of the following positions that you call out: 'sun' (drop to the floor in a ball); 'moon' (bend forward into an arc with arms outstretched and pointing forward); 'star' (stand with feet apart and arms stretched diagonally as if doing a star jump). This game could also be played later in the session.

Little twinkles

Purpose: To introduce the concepts for **Bible focus** by singing a song.

Mime the actions to and hum the tune of the traditional song, **Twinkle, twinkle little star**. See if the children can guess which song it is. Sing the song together.

Bible focus

Links



Discuss the following questions.

- **Have you ever looked at the dark, dark sky at night?**
- **What do you see?**
- **How did the stars and moon get there?**
- **What do you see in the sky in the daytime?**



Show your Bible to the children.

Do you know what this book is called? (Accept responses. The Bible.)

The Bible is full of stories that come from God. It's also called God's Word. Today we're going to hear what the Bible says about the sun, moon and stars.

Teaching time

Gather the children near **Leader's poster 1**. Have ready the sheet of star stickers, as well as the sun, moon and star shapes decorated in the **Shiny shapes** activity (see **Start up**). You will also need the children's 'dark glasses' and 'light glasses'.

Long ago there was a time called 'the beginning'. Only God was there in the beginning. There was God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There was no one else.

Listen to what the Bible says about the beginning.



Read **Genesis 1:1** from a CEV Bible.

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit made everything. God made the whole universe.

At first everything was dark, dark, dark.

Hand out a pair of 'dark glasses' to each child.

Let's look at things through our 'dark glasses'.

Point out various items around your area.

Then God spoke and said, 'I command light to shine!' And bright, bright light started to shine.

Hand out a pair of 'light glasses' to each child.

Let's look at things through our 'light glasses'.

Point out various items around your area.

God gave the dark time a name.

What did God call the dark time? (Accept responses. Night.)

God gave the light time a name.

What did God call the light time? (Accept responses. Day.)

Later, God made some special lights to shine in the sky. One of them is big, round and very, very hot. It shines in the day.

Can you guess what it is? (Accept responses. The sun.)

Ask a child to hold up the sun decorated in the **Shiny shapes** activity (see **Start up**).

How do we know when the day is beginning? (Accept responses. The sun comes up.)

Let's be the sun coming up.

Start on your knees in a curled ball position. Slowly rise and spread your arms wide.

How do we know when the day is ending? (Accept responses. The sun goes down.)

Let's be the sun going down.

Slowly retract your arms and return to the curled ball position.

God made the other lights that shine in the sky at night. One of them sometimes looks like a ball and other times looks like a banana.

Can you guess what it is? (Accept responses. The moon.)

Ask a child to hold up the moon decorated in the **Shiny shapes** activity (see **Start up**).

The other night lights look small and twinkle-y.

What are they? (Accept responses. Stars)

Look at all the stars in this picture.

Point to **Leader's poster 1**.

Let's stick some more stars on this picture.

Invite the children to stick the star stickers to **Leader's poster 1**.



Bringing it together

Point to **Leader's poster 1**.

Wow! Look at all these bright shiny stars!

Who made all the things we see in this picture?

(Accept responses. God.)

Look at the sun, moon and star shapes the children decorated in the **Shiny shapes** activity (see **Start up**).

These are wonderful – well done!

Who made the real sun, moon and stars?

(Accept responses. God.)

That's right, in the beginning, God made everything. He made day and night, and lights to shine in the sky.

What do you think God must be like if he can make such amazing things? (Accept responses.)

Establish that God must be 'the best', 'strong', 'clever' and so on.)

Prayer

Invite the children to join in the prayer with their suggestions when you pause.

Dear Father God,

Thank you that you, Jesus and the Holy Spirit made the sun, moon and stars. We think you are [pause for the children to offer their suggestions].

Amen.



Music spot

Teach the following song.

In the beginning, track 3 on the *Earth movers* CD.

Take home

Gear

- Small cardboard sun, moon and star shapes
- Glitter glue, tinsel, small metallic paper shapes and stickers
- Glue
- Hole punch
- Lengths of tinsel
- Polystyrene cups decorated with glitter
- Pencil or pen to punch holes in the polystyrene cups

Encourage the children to decorate the small cardboard shapes with glitter, tinsel, metallic paper shapes or stickers. Punch a hole in the top of each shape. Thread tinsel through the holes and attach the pieces of tinsel to a decorated polystyrene cup.

Thread another piece of tinsel through the cup to hang the mobile.



Memory verse

Gear

- A copy of the Memory verse (page 15) for each child
- Children's mobiles made during the **Take home** activity
- Glue

Teach the children the following actions:

- God (point up)
- heaven (spread arms out wide)
- earth (make a round shape with your hands).

Say the Memory verse and encourage the children to do the actions when they hear the appropriate words. Repeat the verse, this time asking the children to join in.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 (CEV)

Hand out the copies of the Memory verse. Ask each child to glue the Memory verse strip around the cup on the mobile. Encourage the children to take home the mobiles in their *Serious play* backpacks.

Activities

Do the **Big Book** activity first, then choose from the others to conclude the session.

Big book

Gear

- The materials needed to make the **Big books** (see **Unit introduction**, page 7)
- A **Children's poster 1** for each child
- Five star stickers for each child
- A copy of **Sentence 1** (page 14) for each child
- Glue


Invite the children to stick star stickers on their **Children's posters**. Help them fix the posters into their **Big books** using the chosen method (see **Unit introduction**, page 7). Glue **Sentence 1** underneath the poster. Read the sentence to the children: God made the sun, moon and stars. Collect the **Big books** after this activity so you can add to them next lesson.

Superstars

Gear

- Body glitter and face paint
- Lengths of tinsel
- Earth movers* CD and CD player

Decorate the children as 'stars' and 'comets'. For 'stars', use body glitter on their faces and tinsel in their hair. For 'comets', use body glitter or face paint on their faces and tie strips of tinsel to hang from their arms.

 Play **In the beginning**, track 3 on the *Earth movers* CD. Encourage the children to dance to the song and run around like comets and shooting stars.

Think about it

Do the children understand that God has always existed, even before anything else?

Do the children appreciate how awesome God is to be able to create all of these things?

Solar system search

Gear

- Coloured cardboard sun, moon and star shapes, or magazine pictures of night and day scenes
- Torches (optional)
- Glue
- Sheets of paper or cardboard

Hide the cardboard shapes or magazine pictures around the room. Ask the children to find as many different pictures of things that God made as they can. You may wish to get the children to use torches to do this for added enjoyment. If time permits, invite the children to use the pictures to make individual collages on sheets of paper or cardboard.

Munchies

Gear

- Round and star-shaped biscuit cutters
- Slices of bread
- Butter, yellow sprinkles and silver cachous (cake decorations)
- Pineapple juice

Help the children cut round and star shapes from the bread slices using the biscuit cutters. Butter the bread and invite the children to decorate the circles with yellow sprinkles and the stars with silver cachous. Serve 'sunshine' (pineapple) juice and enjoy.



Think ahead

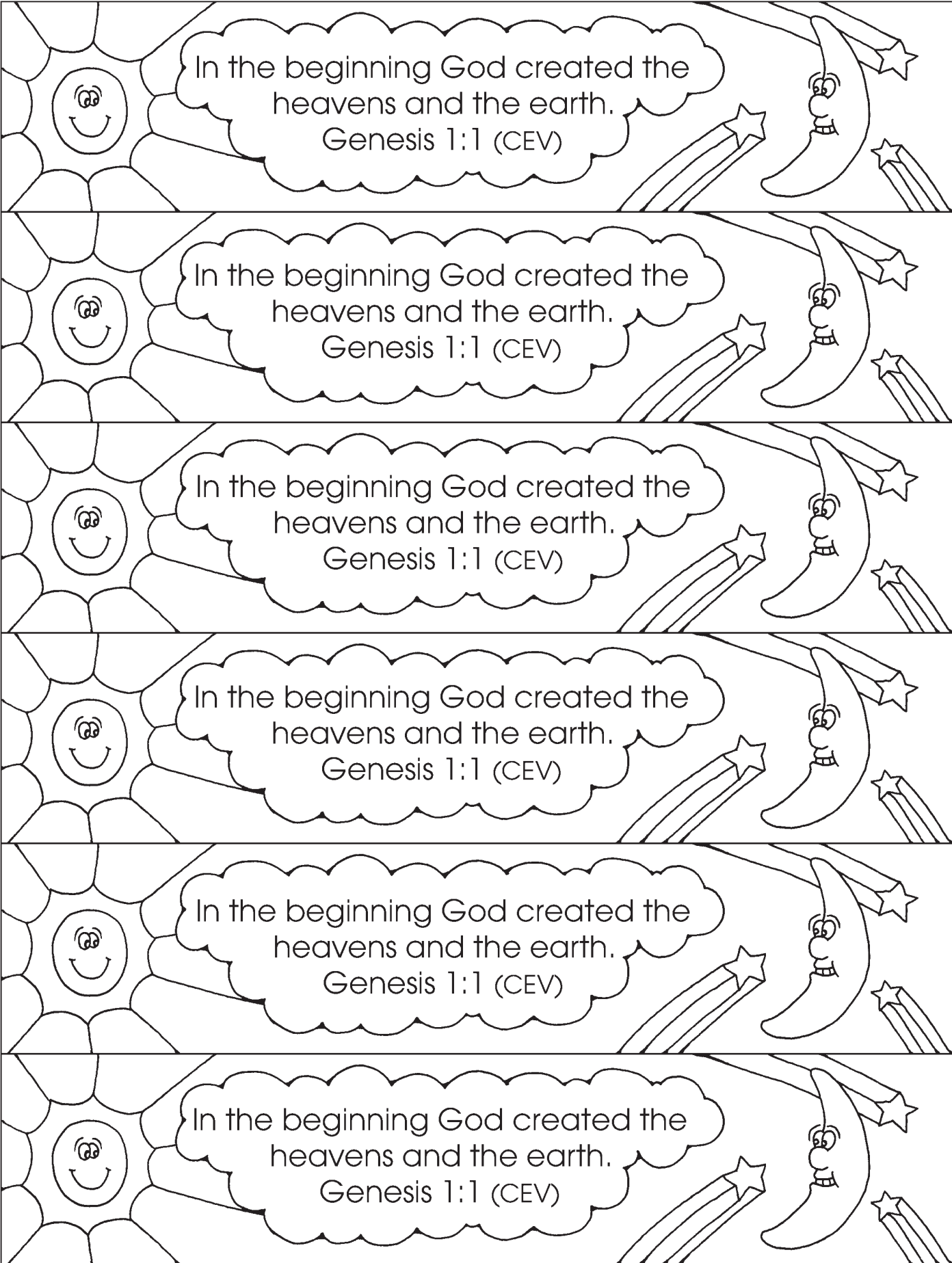
You will need **Leader's poster 2**, the children's **Big books**, a copy of **Children's poster 2** and **Sentence 2** for each child, a globe and assorted maps and pictures of oceans, beaches, deserts and mountains.

See **Get ready** in **Session 2** (page 18).

Keep the strips of blue cellophane to use in the Memory verse activity in **Session 2**.

Sentences to go with children's poster in Big Book activity

God made the sun, moon and stars	
God made the land and the sea	2
God made plants and trees	3
God made animals	4
God made people	5
Jesus is God's Son	6
Jesus made two blind men see	7
Jesus told stories about God	8
Jesus died on the cross for you and me	9
Jesus is alive!	10



The purchaser of the *Serious play* SP1 manual is entitled to photocopy this page for use with his or her group.