

General Church Education



The First Day

Genesis 1:1-5

Lesson 1

Youth Journey Program

Creation: Reflection of God

Level C: For ages 11-14 years

Teacher Background

Creation: Reflecting God through Correspondences

A Key for Understanding the Word

There is a New Church teaching that, “The Word of God is like a body with a living soul” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1408). Many readers have sensed this deeper level of meaning within the words and images of the Bible.

God wrote His Word so that every image contains multiple levels of meaning. The literal meaning focuses on the natural, physical world. A deeper symbolic meaning focuses on the world of the spirit, the world of the human mind. The relationship between the two levels is called “correspondence”. Natural images and symbols “correspond” to spiritual qualities.

We often make this connection between levels without thinking about it. For example, we may talk about not “muddying the waters”, or say that a child is “testing the waters”. When we say “not muddying the waters” we are not talking about water at all; we are saying that false or misleading ideas should not be brought into a situation. Similarly, a child “testing the waters” is experimenting with his or her behavior to see how others react. These sayings make connections between the way true ideas work in our minds with the way water works in the natural world.

Jesus made connections like this in His conversations with people. To a woman at Jacob’s well, He said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). Jesus was associating the true spiritual ideas He came on earth to teach with water. The connection is in how they are useful—how they work in our lives. True ideas from the Word cleanse our thoughts just as water cleanses our bodies.

Sometimes these connections are harder to see in the stories of the Old Testament. The key, according to the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church, is this concept of correspondences. Correspondences allow us to see more than the general allegory of the human journey to the “promised land” of heaven. They help us see who God is and what He intends for us in specific ways. A knowledge of correspondences can help us gain fresh insight into the stories of the Old Testament.

This is true for the creation story. The Heavenly Doctrine explains creation in terms of a person’s step-by-step spiritual progress along the path to heaven. Each “day” of creation pictures a new level of personal development. The seventh day is a beautiful picture of the restful state of heaven—a state free from the struggles against selfishness that we all deal with in this world.

The spiritual meanings of the days of creation are interwoven throughout this lesson. We hope they bring this familiar story to life in new ways.

Correspondences are natural truths in which spiritual truths are reflected as in a mirror. *Arcana Coelestia* 9300



The First Day

Level C

Genesis 1:1-5

Ages 11-14

Life Focus: The Word and the created world reflect the Lord, the Creator.

Lesson Focus: Everything in the natural world is connected to the world of the spirit by means of correspondences. The story of creation pictures the stages of a person's preparation for heaven.

Reading: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day (Genesis 1:1-5).

Lesson 1		Materials Supplied	Materials Needed
1. Getting Started (2-3 minutes)	Welcome Warm-up Activity	A Light in the Darkness directions p. 4	
2. Focus on the Word Use all activities (5-7 minutes)	Read the Word Talk About It discuss the reading	<i>see Reading</i> above Talk About It discussion guide p. 4	
3. Learn by Doing Choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes)	Act It Out students do tasks while blindfolded; choose between a group or individual task	Living in the Dark directions p. 5	materials vary with activity choice—options include putting up a tent, clay sculpture, drawing, sorting blocks or building a tower out of blocks
	Movie watch a video introducing the idea of correspondences and then discuss	The Bible, Creation and a Can of Peaches discussion pp. 5-6 video at https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-how-is-the-bible-like-a-can-of-peaches/	computer or other viewing device
4. Wrap It Up (2-3 minutes)	Take the Message Home introduce quotation for the week	Take Home Cards p. 7	

1. Getting Started

Welcome

A Light in the Darkness

Warm-up Activity

Get students thinking about ways in which we use the words “light” and “darkness”. Read each phrase below aloud and ask the students to explain its meaning.

1. What does being “in the dark” about something mean?
2. When people speak of the “darkest days of WWII” do they mean there was no light?
3. Why can a blind person say, “I see!”?

Darkness is commonly used to mean ignorance or confusion; light to mean have clarity, to understand accurately, to know the truth.

2. Focus on the Word

Read

Genesis 1:1-5

Talk About It

In what ways is the Word different from other books? It was written by the Lord. It is the only source for learning about the Lord and the life of our spirits. It is written in parables. Stories have a hidden inner meaning. Correspondences are the key that unlocks the hidden meanings.

What are the two parts of the Word? The Old Testament, containing the law and the prophets, and the New Testament, which tells about God coming into the world as the Lord God Jesus Christ. Show the first page of the each testament.

What is the first book of the Word? Genesis, which means “beginning”.

Genesis starts with “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Our minds have a “heaven” and an “earth” as well. Brainstorm what “heaven” and “earth” in our minds could be. “Heaven” is the part of us that knows about the Lord and wants to do what is right. “Earth” is our understanding of natural things and how life looks to our five senses.

Genesis says the Lord created the world in seven days. Science tells us that the world developed over a much longer time. Many find this confusing. How does the Heavenly Doctrine bring these ideas together? The Bible is written in symbolic language. Stories in the Word are parables about our own lives. The days of creation correspond to the stages of a person’s spiritual development. Just as we grow from birth to old age one step at a time (baby, toddler, child, adolescent, adult), our spirits develop step-by-step too.

We are born into darkness—“without form and void”. We do not know anything. On the “first day” we begin to take in the world around us and our mind begins to form ideas. Light dawns.

To enter heaven we must be born again. This spiritual birth (or re-birth) takes place when a person is an adult. It starts when a person allows true ideas from the Word to shine into his or her mind and light up the way to heaven.

Just as natural light helps us see our way in the world, heavenly light from the Word leads us to heaven—where the Lord can make us truly happy.

3. Learn by Doing

Choose one or two activities

Choice

Living in the Dark

Sight makes it easy for us to do routine tasks. Let students find out how being “blind” can make even easy tasks difficult. Do a blindfolded activity and then discuss the parallels between natural and spiritual sight.

Large Group Blindfolded Activities

1. **Put Up a Tent**—Put up a tent up without blindfolds. Take it down and then put it up again with blindfolds on. Choose one person to see. He or she can give directions but may not touch the tent!
2. **Sheep and Shepherd Outdoor Activity**—Use a rope to mark out a “sheepfold” area on the ground. Blindfold students and then scatter them by spreading them out in a wide area. Sheep may not speak—they can only bleat. Choose a shepherd (who can see). He or she will direct the sheep into the fold by whistling and clapping only.

Small Group Blindfolded Activities

1. **Sculpt or Draw**—Invite students to write the names of animals on small pieces of paper. Fold the pieces and put them in a bowl. Each student picks out a folded slip and looks at it without disclosing the contents. Then each student draws or sculpts their animal while blindfolded. Others guess what has been drawn or sculpted.
2. **Shape Sort**—Blindfold students and ask them to sort materials of mixed shapes into piles of the same shape. Use blocks, beads or coins.
3. **Build a Tower**—Blindfold students. Give them wooden blocks and ask them to cooperate in building a tower.

Discussion

1. What difference did sight or blindness make to the activity?
2. What is spiritual “blindness”? How could spiritual blindness affect a person?

Choice

The Bible, Creation, and a Can of Peaches

Every natural thing is connected to something spiritual. This is true of the physical things in creation. It is also true of the people, places and things in the Word. The connection or relationship between natural and spiritual things is called correspondence.

Two things correspond because they have an equivalent use, but at different levels, the natural and the spiritual. For example, the natural sun, which is the source of all life on earth, corresponds to the Lord, who is the source of all spiritual life. Correspondence is a mutual relationship, working in both directions. It literally means “to respond together”, to co-respond.

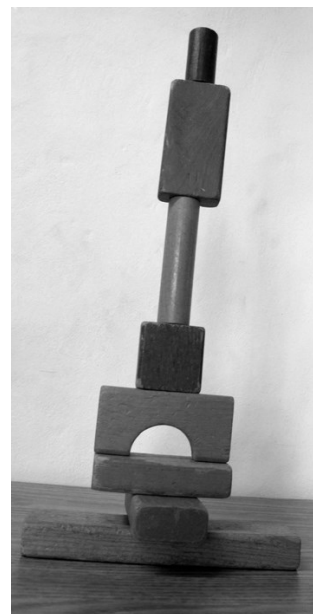
Human beings are both natural and spiritual. We have physical bodies, and spiritual minds and souls. Correspondences help us understand what the stories in the Bible are teaching us about our own spiritual lives.

Materials Needed

Look through activity directions. Choose an activity. Materials will vary depending on the choice you make.

Prepare in Advance

Preparation will vary depending on your activity choice.



Video Online

View at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-how-is-the-bible-like-a-can-of-peaches/>

The Bible, Creation, and a Can of Peaches *continued*

This video introduces the concept of correspondence which will be used throughout the rest of *Creation: Reflection of God*. Watch the video and explore the topic using the discussion questions provided below. Read through the questions and select the ones that will work best for your group.

1. What word is used to describe the relationship between natural and spiritual things? (correspond or correspondence)
2. We know that a loaf of bread is real because we experience it through our senses. We can see it, smell it, touch it, and taste it! How do we know that love is real? (We experience it in different ways, through feelings and thoughts, through interacting with other people.)
3. What are some other things that we can't see or touch, but we know are real? (all emotions—anger, grief, etc.; ideas or thoughts)
4. What would happen if a baby didn't have any food? What would happen if a baby didn't have any love? Is one worse than the other? Are they equally bad? Why or Why not?
5. The video uses Jesus saying, "I am the bread of life" as an example of a place where there is a clear inner meaning. Can you think of other examples in the Word? *Hint*: think of quotations from the Word that start with "I" or "You". (I am the bright and morning star. I am the light of the world. I am the Alpha and the Omega. You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. I will make you fishers of men.)
6. The video compares a full can of peaches to the Word or Bible. To get inside a can to eat the peaches you need a can-opener. Do we have a "can-opener" for the Word? (The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells us the correspondences for many things in the Word.)
7. Sometimes religion and science seem to disagree. How the earth began is one of the topics that people argue about. Scientific ideas about creation—the big bang theory, the age of the earth, the way different kinds of plants and animals developed—seem very different from the story of creation given in the Bible. How does the idea of natural and spiritual things corresponding affect how we understand the story of creation? How might the idea of correspondence make a difference in the disagreement between religion and science?

4. Wrap It Up

Closing

Stories in the Word are not only about the natural world, but also about the spiritual world. How are these two ideas connected? (Correspondences)

What is the story of creation about on a spiritual level? (A person's journey to heaven)

Why is it important to let the light of heaven into your life?

Take the Message Home

Read this quotation aloud: "Come and let us walk in the light of the Lord?" (Isaiah 2:5). Ask the students to ask themselves, "Are there areas of darkness in my life?" If there are, ask the Lord to shine His light on them!

Give Take Home Cards (p. 7) to the students as they leave and suggest they put them up somewhere they will see them this week.

Take Home Cards
Make a copy for each student.

