

“IT WAS VERY GOOD!”

Once a sculptor created many beautiful things. Each time the sculptor finished a creation, she looked at it and saw that it was good.

She walked among her creations, cared for them, and saw that no harm came to them. The sculptor loved what she had created.

But the sculptor had a vision of something special. She wanted to give this creation something more. She wanted this creation to be like her.

Because the sculptor cared so much about her creations, other people began taking special interest in them too. The sculptor had helped others see her vision of beauty and goodness and helped them to care about her creations.

So God, like a sculptor, created humans—male and female—in the image of God.

Humans were given the gift of being able to care and love, and they lived in relationship with their God, their Creator.

And God looked around at all creation, and behold, it was very good!

3 STATEMENTS

- You are part of God's creation; that means you are good.
- God cares for you.
- Around God you can feel safe and you are free to be you.

the

Source

OUR GOD, THE CREATOR

God has made you. *You are part of God's creation; that means you are good.*

Maybe you're thinking, "Tell my parents that!" God isn't blind. God knows that you sometimes do bad things. But because it was God who made you, you are made well. God made you the way you are and that makes you special. You

may sometimes think you're not worth much, but to God you are precious.

The First Article of the Apostles' Creed is about God our Creator. Read the First Article on page 174. It begins with the words "I believe." That means when you say the Apostles' Creed, you are making a bold statement of what you believe.

Remember that this belief is not thinking that God exists. When God calls you to believe, God calls you into a relationship. When you say the Apostles' Creed, you are boldly proclaiming that you love the God you are about to describe.

The Apostles' Creed refers to God as "the Father." (The Lord's Prayer also calls on God as "Our Father.")

But God is more than male or female.

In Session 16, the passage from Isaiah 49:14-15 compared God to a nursing mother. The opening story in this session compares God to a female sculptor.

Religious language at times borrows human picture language to talk about God. It helps us know God when God is described in terms we can understand.

When the Bible or the Creed compares God to a father, it means God loves us like a caring father. It doesn't mean that God is a man or that God is exactly like *our* fathers. It is God's way of saying how very much God loves you!

So when the Bible compares God to a nursing mother, it means God loves us like a caring mother. It doesn't mean that God is a woman or that God is exactly like *our* mothers. It is the Bible's way of saying how very much God loves you!

The First Article also calls God *almighty*. You can see two words: *all* and *mighty*. God is all-powerful, stronger than all things, and in all ways able to do all God chooses to do.

It's hard for us to understand someone who is all-mighty. But God takes even the things we can't completely understand and uses them for

us. God takes that power and uses it to love you.

God's love for you does not come out of God's weakness or God's need. God's love for you comes out of power. In fact, God's love for you is an almighty love. Can you think of more powerful love?

This God is so powerful that all of the universe, all that ever was or is or ever will be was made by this Creator. And the wonder of it all is that this powerful one wants us to call him *Father*.



JEFF GREENBERG

God is like everything you wish a loving father would be: God provides for you, God protects you, God never hurts you, God knows you completely, and God loves you powerfully. *God cares for you.*

GOD CARES FOR YOU!

Our God is a careful God: full of care for you. And God is watching out for you. Have you ever been around a dog who thinks you're going to hurt her puppies? There is no question whose side that mother dog is on! At all costs she will protect those little ones.

You are God's creature, God's child. And there is no question whose side God is on! God wants to protect and provide for you.

You are part of God's creation; that means you are good.

Look up the following Bible passages and match them with the comments below.

- ___ 1. Matthew 6:25-34
- ___ 2. Matthew 6:13
- ___ 3. Luke 13:34
- ___ 4. Romans 8:31
- ___ 5. Psalm 23
- ___ 6. 1 Peter 5:7

- a. God protects you and provides for you like a shepherd cares for sheep.
- b. God is on your side.
- c. God wants to protect you like a hen protects her chicks.
- d. God delivers you from evil.
- e. God provides for your every need. You don't have to worry.
- f. God cares for you.

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST ARTICLE

The following questions will help you understand more about the First Article of the Creed (page 174). You may want to use a dictionary to help answer some of these questions.

1. What does *creed* mean?

2. What does it mean to believe in God?

3. What has God created?

Read the explanation to the First Article of the Apostles' Creed on page 174. (That is the part that begins with the words "What does this mean?") The following questions will help you understand more about Luther's explanation.

4. What is it that God does for you?

5. Why does God do this for you?

6. We do not deserve everything God does for us, but we can respond to God's gifts. List some ways you can respond to God's love and mercy.

Around God you can feel safe and you are free to be you.

I THINK

Figuring out who you are is a life-long process. Generally speaking, as you get older you get a clearer picture of who you are. But the years of adolescence are years when it is sometimes the hardest to know just who you are!

The Apostles' Creed can help you. You are a creature. That means that you have been created by the Creator who loves you and cares for you.

The Apostles' Creed also tells you who you are by telling you *whose* you are. You are the Lord's. You belong with God. And you are loved.

Have you noticed that around some people you feel like you belong. You feel understood, loved, and safe—safe because you know they would never hurt you, safe because you know they would always protect you.

When you feel that way, you don't have to worry how to be. You are free to be yourself.

That's what it is like to be in relationship with God. *Around God you can feel safe and you are free to be you.*

Think about someone who lets you be you. How does that person make you feel understood? Loved? Safe?

Now think about what God has done for you. How has God preserved you? Provided for you? Protected you? Made you feel safe?

Shaping life

TECHO Y PAN

Think of something you have really wanted. Now imagine that someone gave it to you. How would you feel about that person? You would probably feel so grateful, that no one would have to remind you to say "thank you."

Now think about what God has done for you. God has given you your life. God has provided for you, protected you, and promised to be with you like a perfect parent. God has made you free to be you.

God cares for you.

Though God has given us even more than we need, we sometimes don't stop to think about it. Surrounded by blessings, we forget to thank and praise God. We take so much for granted!

There once was a North American who decided to vacation in Mexico. While he was flying to Mexico City, he met a priest on the plane who worked in a small village.

Since he didn't know any Spanish, he agreed to visit the priest's village for the first few nights.

The man was shocked at what he saw. The people there did not live in houses. They had taken what seemed to be discarded pieces of wood and plastic and built little huts.

But the man was most shocked at seeing how thankful the people were.

"How can you live like this and be happy?" he asked.

Surprised at such a question, an old man replied, "God is good to us. Not only does God love us, but God gives us all we need."

"You have everything you need?" asked the North American.

"Oh, yes. God has given us a roof and bread. And sometimes when we



RETTY GROSCH

FURTHER

opportunities

Bible Reading

When it comes to our prayer life, sometimes we are better at saying "please" than saying "thank you." Read Luke 17:11-19. What do you think God is teaching you in this story? Pay attention to how the Samaritan thanked Jesus.

Memory

Memorize Luther's explanation to the First Article of the Apostles' Creed. As an additional challenge, memorize one or more of the following: Psalm 23; Matthew 6:31-33; 1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 145:15-16.

Activity 1

Interview parents and ask them about their role as creators. (They don't have to be your own parents, although that might be fun!) In what way are their children created in their image? How do they help preserve, provide, protect, and guard their "creations"? In what ways are

have a little extra bread, we get to share it with a neighbor who may not have any. Our God is good!"

The man learned much that day. That night he learned this song:

Danos un corazón grande para amar.
(Give us a heart big enough to love.)

Danos un corazón fuerte para luchar.
(Give us a heart strong enough to struggle.)

Gente nueva, amando sin fronteras
(New people loving without boundaries)

por encima de razas y lugar.
(beyond race and place.)

Gente nueva, al lado de los pobres
(New people on the side of the poor)
compartiendo con ellos techo y pan.
(sharing with them roof and bread.)

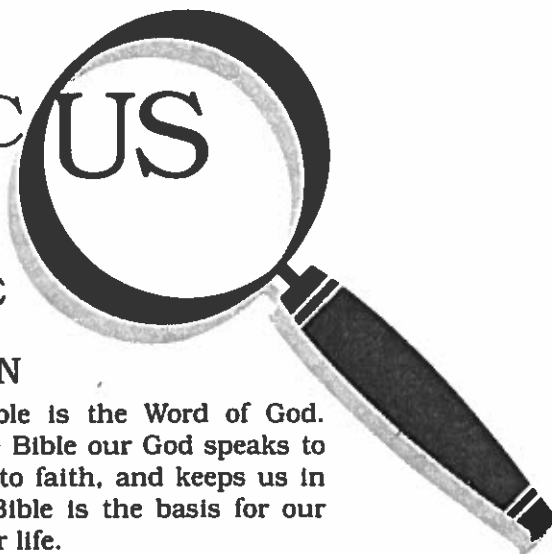
Danos un corazón grande para amar.
(Give us a heart big enough to love.)

Danos un corazón fuerte para luchar.
(Give us a heart strong enough to struggle.)

(The music for this song is on the tape in the resource kit for this course.)

FOCUS

ON SCIENCE AND RELIGION



The Bible is the Word of God. Through the Bible our God speaks to us, calls us to faith, and keeps us in truth. The Bible is the basis for our faith and our life.

But the Bible is not a science book.

For example, we know that the sun is the center of our solar system. The Bible, using language that made sense at the time it was written, talks about the *earth* as the center of the solar system.

When Galileo (1564-1642) said that the sun was the center of the solar system, the church people (mistakenly using the Bible as a science book), forced Galileo to say that he had been wrong. They confined him to his own house where he was watched closely for the rest of his life.

Today, many Christians still want to use the Bible as a science book. And they try to make scientists look like the enemies of religion.

You might hear people say, "Do you believe in evolution or creation?" as if it were an either/or question. Could it be that both theories are right? Could it be that scientists are doing a good job finding out *how* the world came to be, while the Bible does an excellent job telling us *who* brought the world into being?

they like God? In what ways are they not like God?

Activity 2

Interview an artist. How does the artist feel before beginning work on a piece? While working on a piece? After completing a project? Is the work of art a reflection of the artist?

Activity 3

Create something yourself. Write a poem, compose a song, draw a picture, shape a clay bowl. Take part in God's ongoing creation by planting a tree or potting a flower. While you do it, think about the God who created you!

Activity 4

Make a list of the things for which you are grateful. Don't be satisfied with a short list. Take the time to explore the many ways in which God has shown love to you by giving. You may want to put your list in three columns: preserve, provide, and protect.