

THEME 3:

God Knows Best

Overview: Not only did God make us, as we explored in Theme 2, but he also made us in the way that he deemed best. He is the Potter. We are the clay. Who among us hasn't wrestled with the decisions of the Potter in making us? From our human perspective, some things about ourselves are less than best. Some of us are born with genetic diseases or malformations. Others of us wrestle with conditions that affect thinking, feeling, and learning. How is that best? What is the Potter doing?

This theme will help children consider God's good design in making them, even if it's not what they would prefer. God chose everything about each person, didn't make any mistake, and finds joy in each person just as they were created to be. We can freely come to God with our hurts and questions, but ultimately, he is the Potter who asks us to trust him and submit to his plan.

The best news, though, is that one day the things we perceive as imperfections and the sufferings we endure will be wiped away. The Potter will wipe away all our tears—all of them! forever!—and we will see that he really did know best.

For Reflection: Before leading this theme's activities, ponder these verses and questions. Ask God to help you submit to the loving hands of the Potter and help the children see that God always does what is best.

Jeremiah 18:1-6 **Isaiah 29:16; 64:8** **Romans 8:18-39** **Revelation 21:1-7**

How have you struggled with God the Potter's work in your own life?

What aspects about the way the Potter designed you can you thank him for? What specific thing can you trust to his hands today?

What do you want to happen in the hearts of your children as they encounter God the Potter?

Topics and activities covered in this theme include:

Foundational Activities

- Key Phrase: God made me, and his plans for me are best.
- Key Verse: Psalm 18:30a
- Pottery Puzzle Verse Game
- Song Suggestions
- Discussion Starters

The Potter and His Clay

- Jeremiah and the Potter
- Watch the Potter
- The Potter's Hands
- The Greatest Artist

God Chose Everything About Me

- Wonderfully Made Booklet
- Shaped by God's Hands
- God Chose My Interests

Topics and activities covered in this theme include:

Everything About Me Is Best

- Personal Thank You Prayers
- God Does What's Good

Asking the Potter Questions

- Asking Questions
- Why Am I Sick?
- What's in the New Earth?

Saying God Is Not the Creator

- Tall Tales of Evolution
- Meet the Scientists

Pick and choose whatever number of activities help you cover the topics you desire in the time you have available. You could teach one topic per week, or highlight several topics all at once. Use one activity at a time, or put several together to create a longer teaching time.



Key Phrase | **Topic:** Foundational | **Time:** 5 min

Phrase: God made me, and his plans for me are best.

Prepare: Bible, Key Phrase Visual (*printable*)

Do: Introduce the phrase for this week with motions.

God made me (*move hands as if forming something*)

and his plans for me (*open hands like a book*)

are best (*two thumbs up*)

Say: Ask questions to help children think about what each aspect of the phrase means.

God made me: What is your favorite thing about yourself? What things did God think about when he made you?

His plans for me are best: How much does God know about your life? Who knows more about your life, you or God? What does it mean to you that God's plans for you are best? (*Consider reading Ephesians 2:10.*)

Do: Repeat this phrase several times. You could say it together between questions, assign a motion to each child and say it, or see who can say it by themselves. Post the phrase where children can see it.



Key Verse | **Topic:** Foundational | **Time:** 5 min

Prepare: Bible, Psalm 18:30a Verse Visual (*printable*) , "This God" song

Say: Do you ever wish you could do everything perfectly? No human can do everything perfectly, even though we may want to! But the Bible tells us who does do everything perfectly, all the time!

Do: Read Psalm 18:30a from the Bible and from the printed visual.

Say: Everything God does is perfect! He is the one true God who can't do anything wrong. Because he does everything perfectly, we can trust that he is doing the best for us in our lives.

Do: Play Pottery Puzzle Verse Game. Sing "This God" (*Psalm 18:30-31*).



Pottery Puzzle Verse Game | Topic: Foundational | Time: 10 min

Prepare: Bible and/or Key Verse Visual, Pottery Puzzle (*printable*)  or picture of pottery cut into an 9-piece puzzle with actions written on the back of each piece

Ideas for Actions:

Point at something blue	Spin around	Touch your toes
Lean toward something small	Point at something round	Stand on one foot
Clap your hands	Nod your head	Close your eyes

Say: (*Show the completed puzzle to the children.*) This picture shows something a potter made from clay. Wouldn't it be silly if the clay complained that it wanted to be a pizza or an airplane instead? A potter knows better than the clay about the best way to shape and use it. In a much greater way, God knows what is best for you and me. You may not always like everything he does, but his ways are perfect and you can trust him. (*Read Psalm 18:30a.*) We're going to use a pottery puzzle to help us remember this verse.

Do: Flip the pieces over and mix them up. Let children take turns choosing a puzzle piece, then leading the group in following the instructions on the back while they say the verse together. Then they can place the piece in the puzzle.



Song Suggestions | Topic: Foundational | Time: 5 min

Prepare: musical instruments (*homemade, wooden, etc.*), songs (*see list below*), music player

Say: Did you know that God is the one who thought of and created music? The Bible even says that God sings (*Zeph. 3:17*). He gave us the gift of music so we can worship him, but also that we can sing in hard times. We can be reminded that God is good and we can come to him with our problems and questions.

Do: As the children sing and worship God, have them play instruments, sit quietly, or march around the room.

Song Suggestions: (*available on YouTube*):

- ▶ "Change My Heart, O God" (*There is one showing a potter at work at his wheel.*)
- ▶ "Help Me See" by Jana Alarya
- ▶ "This God" (*Psalm 18:30-31*) by Remembering

Note: Specific songs are suggested alongside relevant activities throughout this guide.



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Idea: Discussion can help children think through and consider ideas in a different way. It can help you discern their perspective and hearts. Use these questions after another activity or as a stand-alone activity. Choose the questions that are appropriate to your group and the time you have. You don't have to have all the answers. Simply point children to the God who does!

When holding a discussion, it is often best to find a way to engage children in quiet activity (*especially little ones*). Let children eat a snack, color a picture, or build with blocks to keep their hands busy. Or go on a walk together as you discuss these ideas!

Discussion #1: **God Shapes Your Heart**

Prepare: "Change My Heart, O God" song

Say: God didn't just shape your body in your mom's belly. He is still shaping your heart to be more like him. He wants to shape you to be more like him in the way you love, obey, help, and trust. Let's watch a video of a potter while we listen to the song, "Change My Heart, O God." Who made the changes to the shape of the pottery—the clay or the potter? Who makes the changes in your heart—you or the Potter? How have you seen God change your heart recently? Let's listen to the song again, and as you hear the words, pray them to God.

Idea: Tell how you have seen God shape the hearts of the children you are teaching.

Discussion #2: **Two Worldviews**

Prepare: Bible, whiteboard and markers or large piece of paper and pen

Idea: People who treat God as their Creator should value all people. Help children think through the difference this makes in how they treat others. Treating God as Creator should result in people who

- ▶ Believe all life is valuable (*from conception through natural death*)
- ▶ See value as innate to every person, not based on what they can do
- ▶ Welcome and show kindness to all people
- ▶ Accept how God made us and look for how to use the gifts he has given

Say: We've talked about how God made man in his own image (*Genesis 1:26-27*). This means every life reflects God and has value. We've also talked about how God formed us each in our mom's belly (*Psalms 139*). Should this make a difference in how we treat all people – babies, grandparents, those who are not like us? Let's talk about it.

Do: Draw a vertical line on a large piece of paper or whiteboard. Label one side, "God is Creator" and the other "God is not Creator". Write the children's feedback on the corresponding side of the line as you discuss the difference between these two worldviews.

Say: If you know God as Creator, how should you

- ▶ treat people?
- ▶ value people who can't take care of themselves?
- ▶ think about who God made you to be?
- ▶ love others who are not like you?

After each one, ask the contrasting question about what people might do if they don't believe God is the Creator.



Jeremiah and the Potter | Topic: The Potter and His Clay | Time: 10 min

Prepare: Bible or Faith Comes by Hearing (*Bible.Is*) app for dramatized version of Jeremiah 18:1–6, Jeremiah and the Potter coloring page (*printable*) , blank paper for older children, crayons and colored pencils, “Change My Heart, O God” song

Do: Read or listen to Jeremiah 18:1–6. Have children color or draw while they listen.

Say: Who was Jeremiah? Why did God tell him to go to a potter’s house? What did he see there? What did God say he could do to Israel? What do these verses teach us about God?

Respond: Close in prayer, thanking God for being the Potter. Sing or watch the video of “Change My Heart, O God.”



Watch the Potter | Topic: The Potter and His Clay | Time: 15 min

Prepare: video of a potter working, “Help Me See” song

Do: Watch a video of a potter using a wheel to make something out of clay. Ask the questions below as you watch. Variation: Make arrangements to visit a local potter for a field trip (*check out schools or businesses*).

Say: What do you think the potter is making? Do you think he will make any mistakes? Did you see him start over at any point? What tools did the potter use? Who is the only one who knows what the potter will make? Why is God called the Potter? Does the clay have any choices in the way it’s made? What did you learn about God by watching the potter?

Respond: Sing “Help Me See.” Remind children that God’s plans are always good, even if we don’t always understand them. He makes us to bring glory (*honor*) to himself. He chooses everything about us out of love.



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The Potter's Hands | Topic: The Potter and His Clay | Time: 15 min

Prepare: moldable substance (*play dough, clay, or air-dry clay*), tools for forming designs in the clay, example of something made from clay (*mug, bowl, etc.*), “This God” song, potter’s wheel (*optional: children’s versions can be purchased online*)

Say: Do you know what someone is called who forms things out of clay? A potter’s job is to take a lump of clay (*hold up clay*) and make it into something useful or beautiful (*hold up something made from clay*). The Bible calls God a Potter because he forms each person as he sees fit. God always has a plan and knows exactly what he is doing.

Do: Give each child the playdough or clay.

Option 1: Encourage the children to make something out of their clay and be prepared to share what they made and why they made it.

Option 2: Let children take turns using the potter’s wheel, explaining how it works.

Say: Was it harder or easier than you thought to make something? Did you have an idea in mind when you started? Did that idea change as you worked with the clay? Did you ever feel like you lost control of the clay during the process? Why do you think the Bible calls God the Potter and us the clay?

Respond: When God makes people he makes them as he sees best. He never loses control or changes his mind partway through. He is a good, loving Potter. Sing “This God.”



The Greatest Artist | Topic: The Potter and His Clay | Time: 10 min

Prepare: Bible, modeling clay or play dough, The Greatest Artist (*printable*)  or pictures of professional artwork

Do: Have the children guess what you are making as you form a piece of clay into several simple objects (*snake, snail, egg, heart, leaf, fish, etc.*). Ask the children if they think you could bring any of these things to life. Show the pictures of professional artwork and ask the same question.

Say: No other artist or potter can do what God has done. (*Read Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:7.*) Even if all the greatest geniuses and artists who have ever lived worked together for 100 years, they could never create a living person out of dust. Do you think the prophet Isaiah was thinking about this when he wrote these words? (*Read Isaiah 64:8.*) Only God has the power and wisdom to do this. He is your awesome Creator, the greatest artist ever!

Respond: Play with clay together while you list different things God would have needed to make when he formed the human body (*muscles, bones, eyes, blood, skin, hair, tongue, teeth, etc.*). Thank God that every child in your class is a masterpiece formed by God himself.



Wonderfully Made Booklet | **Topic:** God Chose Everything About Me | **Time:** 10 min

Prepare: Wonderfully Made Booklet (*printable*)  or paper with fill in the blank sentences folded and stapled to make a booklet, crayons or colored pencils, stickers, Key Verse Visual

Page Ideas:

Cover—I Am Wonderfully Made!

God chose _____ hair and _____ eyes for me.

God made me _____ and _____.

God knew I would love _____.

Do: Have a booklet ready for each child. Help children complete the sentences on each page about themselves. Talk about their answers and how God made them as suggested below. Let them color and decorate the booklet.

Say: God chose everything about you. He doesn't make mistakes! God wouldn't change anything about you. You are valuable to God exactly how you are. God has great plans for your life! I wonder how God will use what you love to glorify him and help others?

Respond: Have children say together, "I am wonderfully made!" Give each one an opportunity to say, "God, thank you for making me _____." Finish by saying the Key Verse together.



Shaped by God's Hands | **Topic:** God Chose Everything About Me | **Time:** 15 min

Prepare: Bible, clay or play dough, 10 small objects to make impressions in clay (*penny, rock, toy dinosaur, toy car, twig, button, fork, etc.*)

Do: Show the children how to form shapes (*impressions*) by pressing small objects into clay. After doing this together for several minutes, have them look at the shapes in the clay and try to identify which object made each one.

Say: Did the clay choose which shapes it would have? No, you chose what to put into the clay to give it the shape you wanted it to have. In a much greater way, God chose what to put into you to give you the shape he wants you to have. (*Read Psalm 119:73a.*) God made you and shaped you with his own hands. He chose what to put into you that makes you unique from everyone else. He imagined everything you would be good at and everything you would enjoy. He is in charge and he wants you to enjoy the way he chose to make you.

Respond: Pray for each child by name, thanking God for shaping each of them in a unique way. Encourage the children to tell God they want to enjoy being who he made them to be.

Idea: Follow up this activity by sharing the gospel with the children and challenging them to share it with others. Pray with the children for those who don't know God. (*There is a Gospel Robot object lesson available in the printable pack to help you do this.*)



God Chose My Interests | Topic: God Chose Everything About Me | Time: 10 min

Prepare: God Chose My Interests cards (*printable*)  cut apart and put in a bag, Key Verse Visual, “This God” song

Say: Tell the children something that you or your children showed interest in even when you were babies. Sometimes you can tell what people like even when they’re tiny babies! Some kids like balls, cars, baby dolls, or running. Those interests just keep developing the older someone gets. When God made you, he imagined all kinds of things you would be interested in. He gave you those interests.

Do: Have the children take turns pulling a card out of the bag or container. If that interest describes them, have those children stand up and say the Key Verse together. At the end have everyone say the Key Verse.

Respond: Sing or listen to “This God.” At the end of the song have children shout, “God, you chose everything about me!”



Personal Thank You Prayers | Topic: Everything About Me Is Best | Time: 5 min

Prepare: Ball or soft toy, music

Do: Form a circle on the floor and pass a ball around while you play or sing a song about God being our Creator. Every time you pause the music, the children should freeze in place. Look at whoever is holding the ball and briefly say a very specific “thank you” prayer to God about the way he made that child, such as, “Thank you, God, for giving Eric brown eyes,” or “Thank you, God, for giving Carol a contagious laugh.” Once the children grasp the concept, have them pass the ball and take turns saying “thank you” to God for the ways he made them unique.

Respond: Challenge the children to thank God for something about themselves every day for one week.

*Thank You,
God, for...*



God Does What's Good | Topic: Everything About Me Is Best | Time: 10 min

Prepare: Bible, whiteboard and markers or large piece of paper and pen, “This God” song

Do: Ask the children what good things they enjoyed today and write down their answers. (*If you've got time, children may prefer acting out or drawing what they enjoy while others try to guess what it is.*)

Say: We enjoy doing what seems good to us. This reminds me of a Bible story about a potter. (*Read Jeremiah 18:1-4.*) In this story, the potter did what seemed good to him as he made the clay into something useful. God does this too! You are like clay in God's hand and he enjoys doing what seems good to him in your life. (*Read Jeremiah 18:5.*) Think about yourself and the way God made you. Is there something you wish was different? Maybe you think it would be good if you were prettier, taller, thinner, faster, stronger, healthier, smarter, or different in some other way than how God made you. God enjoyed making you the way you are. He wants to help you enjoy the good way he made you.

Respond: Play “This God” while children write or say a private prayer to God about anything they wish was different about the way he made them. Encourage them to thank him for doing what is good and ask for his help to enjoy the good way he made them.



Asking Questions | Topic: Asking the Potter Questions | Time: 10 min

Prepare: Bible, play dough or clay, Asking Questions cards (*printable*)  cut apart and put in a bag

Ideas for cards:

- ▶ I don't like the shape I am.
- ▶ I wish I was a butterfly instead.
- ▶ Why did you make me this way?
I wanted to be just like my friend.
- ▶ I wish I could talk.
- ▶ Why couldn't I be bigger?
- ▶ I'm so plain. I wish I was more colorful.

Do: Show the children a piece of clay (*or play dough*) and tell them you are going to make something with it and they have to guess what it is. Form several different objects (*i.e., snake, snowman, cupcake, snail, pizza*) and have them guess what you made.

Say: Imagine that these creations started complaining to me about how I made them! What might they say? Draw cards out of the bag and have the objects “complain” about what the card says. That seems pretty silly doesn't it? But sometimes people, who are made by God, ask God questions about how he made them because their lives are hard or things about themselves make them sad. God wants you to come to him with your questions and sadness. He also wants you to know how much he loves you. (*Read John 3:16.*) He loved you so much he gave his Son for your sin. He made a way for you to be with him forever! God has a reason for the way he has made every person. He knows what he is doing.

Respond: Have you ever had questions for God about the way he made you? Take some time today to write them down and talk to God about it. Ask him to help you trust that he knew what he was doing when he made you.



Why Am I Sick? | Topic: Asking the Potter Questions | Time: 10–15 min

Prepare: “Why Am I Sick?” video on the Kids Enjoying Jesus YouTube channel, “Help Me See” song

Say: Have you ever wondered why God lets bad things happen? I want to show you a video about somebody that had bad things happen to him. During this video, watch for the answers to these three questions.

1. What questions did he ask God?
2. How did God use the bad things in a good way?
3. What can you do when bad things happen to you?

Do: Watch the “Why Am I Sick?” video and discuss the three questions above with the children after the video. Challenge the children to consider how they will respond the next time something bad happens to them.

Respond: Listen to “Help Me See” and encourage the children to pray the words of the song to God and trust him even when bad things happen.



What's in the New Earth? | Topic: Asking the Potter Questions | Time: 10 min

Prepare: Bible, What's in the New Earth? cards (*printable*) , pocket chart (*optional*)

Ideas for cards:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ▶ Picture of someone who is sick | ▶ Picture of someone crying | ▶ Picture of new Jerusalem |
| ▶ Picture of a cemetery | ▶ Picture of night | ▶ Picture of open gates |
| ▶ Picture of a devastating weather event | ▶ Picture of a lamb (<i>Jesus is the Lamb of God</i>) | ▶ Picture of happy people (<i>who have believed in Jesus</i>) |
| ▶ Picture of sun, moon, stars | ▶ Picture of angels | ▶ Picture of jewels (<i>city made of jewels</i>) |

Say: Sometimes we ask the Potter questions about why he does what he does. But someday God is going to do an amazing thing! He is going to make everything new again. The Bible says he is going to make a New Heavens and New Earth. Who will live there? The people who have believed in Jesus as Savior! It will be an amazing place. Listen to what the Bible says about it. (*Read Revelation 21:1-6.*) Let's see what will and will not be in the New Earth God is going to make.

Do: Take the “What's in the New Earth?” cards and put them face down on a table. Tell the children that some of the cards are things that will be in the New Earth, and some of the cards are things that will not be in the New Earth. Have them make two columns (*you can use a pocket chart for this*) and take turns turning over the cards and deciding if that will or will not be in the New Earth. Ask questions as you play, such as, “Why won't that be in the New Earth?” “What are you looking forward to when Jesus makes everything new?”

Respond: Give the children the opportunity to pray and thank God for specific things he will do when he makes everything new.



Prepare: Bible, Tall Tales of Evolution (*printable*)  or pictures of giraffe bending down and standing up

Do: Show pictures of a giraffe bending over and standing up. Explain that giraffes have a special system that controls blood flow when they raise or lower their heads so they don't pass out or die from too much or too little blood in their brains. Read the list below and have the children guess which other abilities a giraffe has.

- ▶ An extra strong heart pumps blood up the giraffe's long neck.
- ▶ Tight skin keeps a giraffe's blood from all flowing down to its feet.
- ▶ Veins in the giraffe's neck close automatically when the giraffe puts its head down and open when it puts its head up.
- ▶ Stretchy blood vessels in the giraffe's neck expand and contract to control blood pressure.
- ▶ A sponge in the giraffe's head collects blood when it bends down and then releases the blood into the brain when it stands back up.

Say: Giraffes have all these special abilities that work together every time they bend down or stand up. Only God could do that! Some people say God isn't really the Creator. They believe giraffes evolved from other kinds of animals by accident in a process that took millions of years. If it took millions of years for all of these abilities to evolve, the giraffes would have died from thirst or high blood pressure long before it evolved the complex system it needs to just bend over without passing out. The best explanation is that God is the wise and powerful Creator who designed giraffes with these abilities. (*Read Job 12:7-10.*)

Idea: Research other examples of irreducible complexity (*multiple parts performing crucial functions on which multiple other parts depend*) in creation such as the bombardier beetle or the human eye and share them with the children. Marvel together at God's design of such remarkable systems.

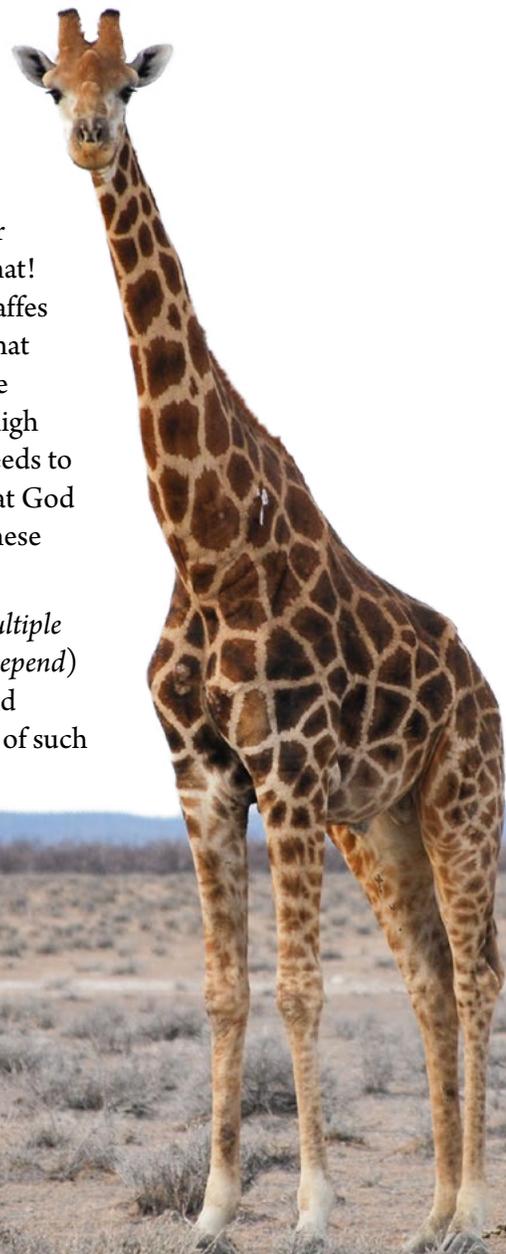


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Meet the Scientists | **Topic:** Saying God Is Not the Creator | **Time:** 15 min

Prepare: Bible, Meet the Scientists posters (*printable*)  or posters with the names of several creationist scientists and facts related to them taped to different walls in your teaching area

Say: Some people say, “Science proves the Bible isn’t true,” or “Real scientists don’t believe God created the world.” But did you know many of the most important scientific discoveries were made by scientists who studied the Bible and believed God is the Creator? I’ve put the names of four scientists on the walls. I’m going to tell you something one of them said or did and you have to guess who it was and go stand next to their name.

Do: Read each accomplishment/quote as the children move around the room to indicate which scientist to whom you are referring.

Isaac Newton	Johannes Kepler	George Washington Carver	Raymond Damadian
This scientist studied math and motion.	This scientist studied math and astronomy.	This scientist studied plants and farming.	This scientist studied medicine.
This scientist’s discoveries about gravity and motion are some of the most important scientific discoveries of all time.	This scientist made important discoveries about the way planets travel through space.	This scientist developed over 300 ways to use peanuts to make things like shampoo, milk, and plastic!	This scientist invented the MRI machine, a medical device that has saved millions of lives.
“Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who sets the planets in motion. God governs all things and knows all that is or can be done.”	“The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order and harmony which has been imposed on it by God.”	“I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting system through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.”	“The source of wisdom and understanding of all that we experience and all that we know comes from the Bible.”

Say: Many famous scientists believed that God is the Creator and that the Bible is true! They believed it because God has made it super obvious. (*Read Romans 1:19-20.*) God wants people to see his obvious work in the universe so they will want to know him as their Creator. Science doesn’t prove the Bible is wrong. Science is overflowing with evidence that God is Creator and his word is true.

Respond: Challenge children to notice God’s obvious handiwork in creation throughout the week and respond in prayer thanking God for providing such evidence that he is the Creator. Also encourage them to lovingly pray for those who don’t honor God as the Creator.