

Foundations for Faith

A Journey of Discovery

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GETTING STARTED

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This study guide uses the inductive (discovery) approach to Bible study. It will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says rather than giving you prepackaged answers. People remember most what they see for themselves and what they express in their own words. To facilitate the discovery process, this study guide provides three kinds of questions:

1. What does the passage say? What are the facts?
2. What is the meaning of these facts?
3. How does this passage apply to your life?

Observe the facts carefully before you interpret the meaning of your observations. Then apply what you have discovered to life today. Resist the temptation to skip the fact questions, since we are not as observant as we think, but find the facts quickly so you can spend more time on their meaning and application.

The purpose of Bible study is to understand the message of the Bible, and more importantly, to see how its message applies to life—in how you think and act, in your attitudes and relationships, and in the quality and direction of your life.

Each discussion requires about one hour. Decide on the amount of time to add for socializing and prayer.

Share the leadership. If a different person is the moderator or question-asker each week, interest grows and members feel the group belongs to everyone. The question-asker's role is not to be the authority or teacher, but to keep the group on task as they go through the questions, letting the Bible speak for itself. To prepare for this role, see “When You Are the Question-Asker” on page 8.

When a group grows to more than ten, quiet people tend to become even quieter. So plan to multiply groups as you grow. You can meet as two groups in different rooms or begin another group at another location or time so that more people can participate and benefit.

Be sure to share contact information so you can easily make plans with each other. Getting together outside of the regular meeting time helps to build community and can lead to richer discussions.

What Is a Q Place Group?

The *Q* is for *questions*. A Q Place group is two to twelve people who meet regularly to discuss questions about life, God, and the Bible.

Q Place as an organization began as Neighborhood Bible Studies in 1960, and has helped thousands of groups and more than a million participants to question, discover, and grow in their relationship with God. To learn how to become a Q Place facilitator, get a copy of the book *How to Start a Q Place*.

When group members agree to the following Group Guidelines and Discussion Tips and then keep each other on track, the stage is set for dynamic discussions and growth.

Group Guidelines

1. The purpose of this group is to discuss questions about life, God, and the Bible.
2. The role of initiators is to facilitate a healthy small group process.
3. This group is not for experts. It's for new discoveries. If you think you are an expert, resist the urge to let the rest of us know. Listen and ask questions so that everyone can discover answers for themselves.
4. The format is informal discussion, not lecture.
5. If at all possible, read and think through the content and questions ahead of time. Share your ideas honestly and openly.
6. In each session a different person may ask the questions in order to encourage group ownership and dynamic discussions.
7. Maintain confidentiality, courtesy, and respect toward others, even if they don't agree with your position. Do not judge others and avoid side conversations.
8. Do not attempt to resolve all differences or conflicts of opinion. Keep moving when there seems to be an impasse.
9. Begin and end on time.
10. Review the discussion guidelines whenever there's a new person in the group.

Discussion Tips

1. **Stick to the topic or passage under discussion** in order to build a common frame of reference. Refer to other material only if your group has studied it together or if it is mentioned in the discussion questions.
2. **Avoid tangents.** Many ideas will surface during the discussion. If the subject is not dealt with in any detail in the material, do not let it occupy too much time. Discuss peripheral topics later.
3. **When discussing the Bible, let it speak for itself.** Instead of quoting other books, religious leaders, or notes in the Bible, try to discover the facts, meaning, and application of the passage together while avoiding religious jargon.

Tools for Studying the Bible in a Q Place Group

1. A study guide for each person in the group.
2. A modern translation of the Bible such as the:
 - *Contemporary English Version (CEV)*
 - *English Standard Version (ESV)*
 - *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*
 - *New Century Version (NCV)*
 - *New International Version (NIV)*
 - *New King James Version (NKJV)*
 - *New Living Translation (NLT)*
3. An English dictionary.
4. Historical maps of biblical accounts (found in the back of many Bibles and some Q Place Bible study guides).
5. Your conviction that the Bible is worth investigating.

When You Are the Question-Asker

Each time a Q Place group meets, a different person may ask the discussion questions so the group can make discoveries together. The following guidelines will help you prepare for this role.

1. Prepare by reading the passage several times, using different translations, if possible. Consider asking for God's help in understanding it. While thinking through the questions, observe which questions can be answered quickly and which may require more time.
2. Begin on time.
3. If your group has decided to start each discussion with a short prayer, then lead the group or ask someone ahead of time to pray. Don't take anyone by surprise.
4. Begin the study by reading the background notes in the discussion guide at the beginning of the chapter.
5. Ask for a different volunteer to read each Bible section. Read the question. Wait for responses. Rephrase the question if necessary to spark discussion. Resist the temptation simply to answer the question yourself. Move to the next question. Skip questions already answered in the group's discussion.
6. Encourage everyone to participate. If one or two people are talking more than the rest, ask the group, "What do the rest of you think?" "What else could be added?"
7. Receive all answers warmly. If needed, ask, "In which verse did you find that?" "How does that fit with verse...?"
8. If a tangent arises, ask, "Do we find the answer to that here?" Put interesting tangents on hold until after the day's discussion. Suggest writing down important questions that aren't addressed in the current discussion so the group can watch for more information as the study continues.
9. Use the summary questions to bring the study to a conclusion on time, allowing time for the group to share how they can pray for each other.
10. Decide on one person to be the host and another person to ask the questions at the next discussion.

Foundations for Faith

A Journey of Discovery

Introduction

The steps people take to a living relationship with God are unique to everyone, but the underlying issues are universal:

- *How did this world and its inhabitants come to be?*
- *If an all-powerful God exists, why is the world today in such a deplorable state?*
- *Does God really care for us?*
- *Is it possible to know God? And if so, how?*

Foundations for Faith is a discussion guide designed to help you walk through these basic, essential questions and to explore the answers given in the Bible. As a frank examination of the Bible, this study puts it all together—what the Bible says God is like and how we can know God.

As you go through the questions, you will begin to see the Bible as a library of books whose central theme is the relationship between the Creator of the universe and humankind. Within this framework, you'll also be given information and the chance to evaluate and decide how its message personally relates to you.

If you're new to the Bible, here's how Bible notation works:

- **Genesis 1:1-5; 2:1-3**

The book of **Genesis**, chapter **1**, verses **1** to **5**
and chapter **2**, verses **1** to **3**.

- **Isaiah 52:13—53:12**

The book of **Isaiah**, chapter **52**, verse **13**
through chapter **53**, verse **12**.

This study covers Bible sections that are not discussed in chronological order, but in the order in which many people's questions can be addressed more effectively. The study works best with a very small group (3-6 people), but individuals have also enjoyed going through this book with another person, taking turns reading the Bible passages and discussing the questions.

The idea is to study together, not to set up a teacher/student relationship. It's crucial for those who are newly discovering the Bible's information to set the pace, with adequate pauses to think and express in their own words the things they are discovering.

1

Genesis 1:1—2:3

What Is God Like?

What do you think of when you see or hear the word *God*?
Share your ideas.

There are many ideas about God, and many religions in the world. How can we know which one is true? Or will any of them do?

Has God ever revealed himself to people?

The purpose of these studies is to see what the Bible says about God and how we can know him. After carefully and honestly examining what the Bible says, you will be better able to choose how you will respond to God. In this first study we begin to see what the Bible says he is like.

Read Genesis 1:1—2:3, looking for all you can learn about what God is like.

1. What verbs describe God's actions in Genesis 1:1-5?

2. What method did God use to create (verses 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24)?

What does this tell you about God?

3. Briefly record the order in which God creates things in the six days:

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

What can you learn about God from this?

*Note: The Hebrew word for **day** can refer to the hours of daylight, a twenty-four-hour day, or an unspecified period of time, and the context of a passage is important in determining which meaning is meant. While there are creation models based on differing views of the timeframe involved, the Bible clearly states that God brought everything into existence.*

4. What did God think of each thing he made? (See verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25.)

5. How are human beings different from everything else God created on the sixth day?

6. In what ways do you see that human beings express the **image** or **likeness** of God?

7. How does it affect your understanding of God when you see that the Bible says a human being is like God, not that God is like a human being?

8. What difference would it make in your life if you believed you were made in the image of God as described in this passage?

9. God **blessed** (verses 22, 28) and **gave** (verses 29-30). What do these actions reveal about God?

10. What is God's final assessment of what he has made (verse 31)?

SUMMARY

1. Recall the actions of God in Genesis 1:1–2:3. How would you describe God from these verses?
2. What do the words ***in the beginning*** tell you about God, God's existence, and God's relationship to time as we know it?
3. How do you feel about the idea that God, rather than human-kind, is central in the universe?
4. What questions about God has this study prompted for you? Write them here so that you can check back and note related discoveries.

The Bible begins with the assumption that God is eternal and that God created the universe out of nothing by his power and design. Our abilities to plan, choose, evaluate, communicate, take responsibility, and act creatively all express how we are created in the image of God.

► *If possible, read the Bible passages and think about the questions in preparation for our next discussion.*