

Genesis

Discover Your Roots

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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 10.

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?

The *Q* is for *questions*. A Q Place is a group of 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 initiator, get a copy of the book *How to Start a Q Place*.

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

Q Place Guidelines

1. The purpose of a Q Place is to discuss questions about God.
2. Initiators start a Q Place and facilitate a healthy small group process.
3. Q Place is not for experts. It's for new discoveries. If you think you are an expert, resist the urge to teach. Instead, try to listen and ask questions so that everyone can discover answers for themselves.
4. The format is informal discussion, not lecture. Q Place discussion guides provide the questions for the discussion.
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.

Q Place 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 any peripheral topic after the study.
3. **When discussing the Bible, let it speak for itself.** Instead of quoting other authorities (books, church 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

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 International Version (NIV)*
 - New King James Version (NKJV)*
 - New Living Translation (NLT)*
 - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*
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 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 discussions. 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.

Genesis

Discover Your Roots

Introduction

Genesis is a book about beginnings, and answers the questions *who* and *why*. Its content is crucial to understanding what it means to be created a human being, to be responsible for choices and relationships.

From the bliss of Eden and fellowship with the Living God, the first man and woman, made in the image of God, end up hiding from God. In what seemed a simple choice, their joy in God and in each other is suddenly changed. They find there is no return to Eden.

The grace of God provides a very different future for this first family. Life is still lived under God's mercy, but it is hard. Adam and Eve experience the sorrow of seeing the way sin plays itself out in the lives of their children and the world around them. Sin let loose begins to run rampant.

Yet throughout the history that follows, there is always someone—Abel, Enoch, Noah, and others living in the same evil world—who has a heart that pleases God. The story of the flood gives the world a clean slate, a fresh beginning.

Out of Noah's lineage comes a man whom God chooses. The LORD reveals himself to Abraham as the one true God, choosing to build a nation, a special people, from this one man and his wife, Sarah. He gives Abraham far-reaching promises of descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens, a land that will belong to these people, and blessing through them for the whole world. When Abraham dies, he leaves one promised son, Isaac. But God had promised much more than that: ***“I will be with you and be your God.”***

Isaac inherits God's promise, and like his father, Isaac must wait some time before his wife conceives. She bears twin sons, Jacob and Esau, whose struggles dramatize the continued story of God's blessing and choosing.

The remainder of the Genesis account is the story of Jacob's family. It is the story of God working out the fulfillment of his great plan for the world. The people in the story have no special talents to make them worthy of God's blessing. Their lives are laced with humanity's fear, deceit, and waywardness. The marvel is the way God works through all their life events to display his grace and accomplish his purposes.

God's grace does not leave these characters alone; he gives them awesome experiences, experiences that help them trust him. Though he lets them wander, he is with them. God is patient, but he pursues his purposes. In the end, Jacob finds himself, and his many descendants, not in the land God promised but in Egypt, a refugee from the famine in Canaan. But the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 48:15, 21) is more real to him than ever before and he is strong in his confidence that God will bring them back home.

In this story of grace, Joseph is a stellar player. Taunted, sold as a slave, and believed dead by his father, this son is the one who teaches the family what it means to forgive, and ends up saving the life of his family for God's future purposes for them.

Genesis is a drama of frail human beings and a great God. The life of Jacob demonstrates how God can change a person, dealing with all the twists in his nature. The life of Joseph shows God's saving sovereignty that not only overcomes wrong deeds but also ends with salvation. Studying Genesis will give you new insights into yourself and your world, and especially into the person of God, who is Creator, Redeemer, Sovereign, Judge, and Friend.

1

Genesis 1:1-13; Psalm 104:1-9

In the Beginning

H*ow did the world begin? Who made God? Why am I here?* From four-year-olds to philosophers, people ask questions like these. The biblical narrative of creation is neither a philosophical treatise nor a scientific paper, but it offers a firm answer to questions about beginnings and purpose. Its subject is a God of grandeur and majesty who is the source and sustainer of all that is.

Read Genesis 1:1-13

1. Read these verses aloud from two different translations. What repeated words or phrases do you find?

2. What do the strong statements in verse 1 tell you about God and about the universe?

What does *in the beginning* suggest?

Note: Genesis does not speculate about the origin of God.

3. Look up the meaning of *beginning* and *create* in a dictionary. What do these definitions add to your understanding of verse 1?

See also Hebrews 11:3.

*Note: **Create**, the Hebrew word bara, appears here only in verses 1, 21, and 27. In 1:1 God brings into being something that has had no previous existence.*

4. Read verse 2 from several different translations. What activity gives hope to the dismal situation described in this transitional phase of creation?

5. What verbs in verses 3-5 reveal what God says and does?

6. What is the first thing named in creation?

What basis do you see here for the Jewish tradition of beginning each new day at sundown?

7. How can an awareness of time, the passing of days, help you to live more wisely?

Read again Genesis 1:6-13

8. What three verbs in verses 3-5 are repeated in verses 6-13 to describe what God does on the second day?

*Note: The Hebrew word **vault** in verse 6 can also be translated **expanse** or **dome**.*

9. Describe the events of the third day and God's purpose in bringing further order to his creation. What new names are given?
10. How does the pattern of propagation God initiates assure reliable laws of growth?

Note: The next time you plant a seed, consider that you are performing an act of faith in the reliability of God's plan described in verse 11.

11. Use your imagination. What sounds, sights, smells, and tastes would you experience if you were a witness to the events of verses 11 and 12?

12. What connection do you see between the things God calls **good** (verses 4, 10, 12)?

13. What difference does it make to you that God is creator, maker of time, evaluator, boundary-setter, and Name-giver?

Read Psalm 104:1-9

14. Read these verses as a poetic commentary on Genesis 1:1-13. What imagery from the psalm enlarges your view of God's involvement with his creation?

15. What is the psalmist's response to God as he considers God's creation?

What is your response?

SUMMARY

1. What things are stated or implied about God in the passages considered in this study?

2. What difference does it make in your life to believe in the God of Genesis?

PRAYER

O God, you are very great. We are awed by your power, your creativity, and your plan in creating the world. Help us to notice the intricacy of your design and the wonder of what you have made so that we may praise you more fully. Thank you that you are the Maker of time, the Evaluator of what is, the Boundary-setter and Name-giver to what you have made. Help us to know you better and trust you more completely. Amen.