

# Relationships

Connect to Others: God's Plan

Gladys M. Hunt

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# FOREWORD

**W**e were made for relationships, all kinds of relationships—with parents, children, a spouse, an employer, friends, casual acquaintances—yet relating to others is often something we don't do well. Most of our grief in relationships comes as a result of the difficult ones. Broken relationships leave us distressed and empty. Yet if we try to avoid emotional conflict by distancing ourselves from close relationships, we lose an essential part of ourselves; healthy relationships make our lives rich and full and satisfying. In fact, you could say that without relationships, we lose a crucial part of what it means to be human.

What if there were a key that would impact all of our relationships, enabling them to become fruitful and fulfilling? The Bible is a book about relationships, and it reveals that our primary purpose is to be in relationship with God—to know him personally.

From the beginning, in the book of Genesis, God takes the initiative for us to know him. When the first human beings hide after disobeying him, God calls out, “Where are you?” not because he doesn't know, but because he wants them to recognize what they are doing and to come back into full fellowship with him.

God taking the initiative continues throughout the Bible, culminating at the birth of Jesus Christ (Christmas), his death (Good Friday), and resurrection (Easter). That God would go to such extremes to have a relationship with humans is why the full message is called the *gospel*, which means *good news* in Greek, one of the Bible's original languages.

Through this discussion guide you will explore a variety of relationships with people. However, you will find a relationship with God closely interwoven in the questions you discuss. Watch for how God takes the risk of loving, and consider how he can empower us to do the same.

The author of this guide, Gladys Hunt, facilitated Bible study discussion groups beginning in college and extending throughout her life. She and her husband, Keith Hunt, both served as board members for Neighborhood Bible Studies, which now continues as Q Place. Since the early days in the 1960s Gladys earnestly supported the purpose of this organization. She went to be with the Lord in July, 2010.

As you explore many interpersonal relationships in this study, you will find some to emulate and others to avoid. These discussions only scratch the surface of this immense topic. May they spark ongoing personal study and bring increased fruitfulness and fulfillment to all of your relationships.

– Q Place Publishing Team

# GETTING STARTED

## How to Use this Discussion Guide

This study guide uses the inductive approach to Bible study. It will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says. It will not give you prepackaged answers. People remember most what they discover for themselves and what they express in their own words. The 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 the truths you have discovered to life today. Resist the temptation to skip the fact questions since we are not as observant as we think. Find the facts quickly so you can spend more time on their meaning and application.

The purpose of Bible study is not just to know more Bible truths but to apply them. Allow these truths to make a difference 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 Bible is the authority in the group, not the question-asker.

When a group grows to more than ten, the quiet people become quieter. Plan to grow and multiply. You can meet as two groups in different rooms or begin another group so that more people can participate and benefit.

Fill out one Q Place Participants chart at the end of the book and make copies for everyone so that you can easily make plans with others in the group. Getting together outside of the regular meeting time helps to build community and can lead to richer discussions.

## Q Place Guidelines

### **Q Place Basics**

1. The purpose of a Q Place is to discuss questions about God.
2. An initiator starts a Q Place and continues to 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. Share your ideas honestly and openly.
6. At each session a different person can ask the questions and moderate; rotating the question-asking encourages group ownership and dynamic discussions. Answers are directed to the group, and the moderator should not put a stamp of approval or disapproval on answers.
7. Always show 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. If at all possible, read the chapter and answer the questions ahead of time.
10. Begin and end on time.
11. Review the Q Place guidelines whenever there's a new person in the group.



## Q Place Discussion Tips

**1** **Stick to the topic or passage under discussion.** Don't skip around. Build a common frame of reference. Refer to other sections only if your group has studied them together or if they are 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 chapter, 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 (other books, church leaders, notes in the Bible...), try to discover the facts, meaning, and application of the passage together. Avoid religious jargon and technical expressions not found in the chapter you are discussing.



## 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:
  - *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. A 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

1. Prepare by reading the passage several times, using different translations if possible. Consider asking for God's help in understanding it. While working 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 Bible 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 an answer. Rephrase the question if necessary. Resist the temptation 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.
9. 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.
10. Use the summary questions to bring the study to a conclusion on time, allowing time for a closing prayer.
11. Decide on one person to be the host and another person to ask the questions at the next discussion.

# Relationships

Connect to Others: God's Plan



# 1

## Genesis 1—2

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### How It All Began: Created for Relationships

**H**ave you ever asked yourself why God bothered to make human beings? It seemed a risky plan. In this study we see how God began to carry out his plan, getting the world ready for the people he planned to make. Light and darkness, day and night, space to live in, water and land—and then wonderfully he furnished the world with beauty, with animals, birds and fish, along with all kinds of vegetation. But the question remains: Why did God make us? It's clear from this study that God made us for relationships—to relate to him and to each other. Study, and be amazed at God's goodness and his creativity!

#### **Read Genesis 1**

1. What repeated phrases in verses 1-25 help you see the pattern of God's creative work? Notice the verbs.

Read Hebrews 11:3 about God's work in creation.

2. How does the description of the creation of human beings differ from the rest of creation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What place does God give human beings in the scheme of created things (verses 26-30)?

What responsibilities are human beings given?

4. What do you learn about God from the fact that he created humans, both male and female, to fully express his image?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does this tell you about what God had in mind for human beings, and the importance of relationships?

6. How does an awareness of being created in God's image affect your view of yourself, of the members of your family, of others different from you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How does God evaluate his creative work (verse 31)?

### **Read Genesis 2**

*Note: Genesis 2 is a more detailed retelling of the creation of human beings.*

8. Describe the kind of environment God gives the man (verses 5-17).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How does God put man's creativity to work, and what does the man learn from the task (verses 19-20)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What is the first thing God calls ***not good*** about his creation (verse 18)?

How did God plan to remedy this?

11. Compare God's involvement and design in making the man and the woman (verses 7, 21-22).
  
12. What do you learn about God's intention for relationships between human beings?
  
13. How would you put in your own words the man's response when he sees someone of his own kind?

## **S U M M A R Y**

1. What human need do you think God wanted to emphasize with the retelling of the creation story in chapter 2?



