

SUMMER 2018



SUMMER 2018  
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LEADER GUIDE INCLUDED

YOU - CONNECT. GROW. SERVE. GO!

### COMING NEXT QUARTER

**AUTHENTIC DISCIPLESHIP**

Authentic discipleship is a lifelong process.

**TURN IT AROUND**

Hope in God results in overcoming the storms in our lives.

**ONE MISSION, ONE MESSAGE**

Is your church's mission to lift up Jesus?

**THE TRUTH STARTS HERE**

As a believer, I can't allow the culture to dictate how I live.

**NO DOUBT ABOUT IT**

I don't have to know everything, but I can still share what I know about Jesus.

**FINAL DESTINATIONS**

Your choices determine your destination.

*Subject to change*



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# HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

You won't find it on a map, but a highway to heaven does exist. "The Roman Road" is explained in the Book of Romans in the Bible, and it tells how to go to heaven.

The road begins at Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." God is the source for our journey to heaven. He gives power for salvation to all who believe.

We need God's power because we have a problem with sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "Sin" means missing the mark or missing God's intended destination for us. None of us can reach that destination on our own because everyone is a sinner.

When we work, we earn money. Sin earns wages as well—wages of death. Because God loves all sinners, He has provided another route: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The highway to heaven is found in Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." We need to confess our sin and ask God for forgiveness. To confess Jesus as Lord involves agreeing with God about your sin and your need for salvation. You must repent of your sin, turning away from the direction in life in which you are going. To "believe in your heart" is to place your faith in Jesus, trusting that He died on the cross to pay for your sins. "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

If you would like to have salvation in Jesus Christ, sincerely pray a prayer like this one: "Dear God, I confess to You my sin and need for salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Amen."

Share your faith in Jesus with a Christian friend or pastor. Becoming a Christian is your first step on the lifelong road of spiritual growth and service God desires for you. Follow Christ in believer's baptism by immersion and join a local church.



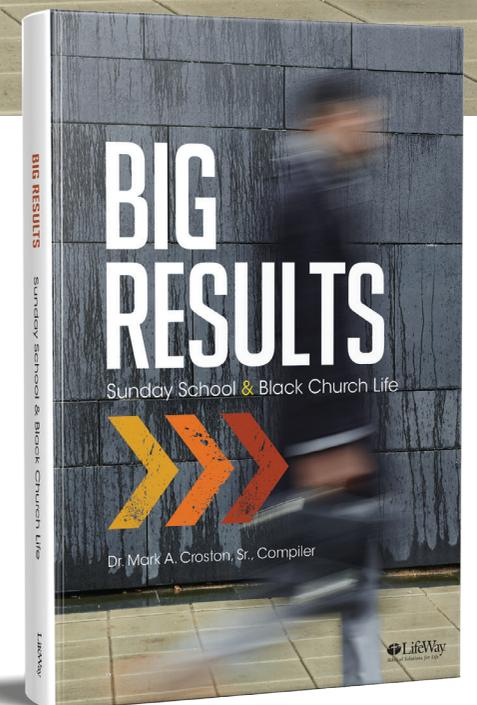
# BIG RESULTS

Sunday School & Black Church Life



Dr. Mark A. Croston, Sr., Compiler

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black and multiethnic church for  
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## Staying Fit ... Spiritually

We talk a lot about the importance of staying physically fit, but what about the health of your spirit? Connect, Grow, Serve, Go is a call to evaluate your present spiritual condition and discover ways to improve your spiritual health. Packed into each biblical concept—Connect, Grow, Serve, Go—is a simple way you can move forward, not remain stagnant. Best of all, these tools will stand the test of time—no “fad” diets here. They will help you become spiritually healthy, and stay that way.



WITH AN OPEN HEART  
*MARK 12:29-31*

**Connect** urges you to worship, pray, fellowship, and relate to others in positive relationships at work, at home, and in other settings. Spiritual fitness results when you connect with God, with others, and with your church family.



IN BODY, MIND, & SPIRIT  
*ROMANS 12:2*

**Grow** refers to learning and understanding more about God and His expectations of His people, which comes through Bible study. You grow by applying that knowledge to your everyday living.



WITH WILLING HANDS  
*1 PETER 4:10-11*

**Serve** describes the work you do inside your church. Your church is full of ministry and service opportunities. You serve by using your spiritual gifts, skills, and passions to glorify God. All of us must work together for the church to function as God intended.



WITH READY FEET  
*MATTHEW 28:19-20*

**Go** moves you outside the church and into the community and the world. Evangelism and missions are ways to go into your community and the world in the name of Jesus Christ. It might be uncomfortable at first, but you will experience first-hand the difference Christ can make through you.

---

Connect, Grow, Serve, Go must impact YOU, the individual, before it can permeate your circle of friends, your Bible study group, and then the church as a whole. But balance is the key! We must be actively participating in all four areas if we want to be spiritually healthy. All Go and no Connect with God or other believers results in powerless activity and wears you out. A steady diet of Grow without the action of Serve or Go leads to unhealthy spiritual obesity and laziness. We need a balanced spiritual diet to remain fit and able to serve God in the ways He has gifted us.

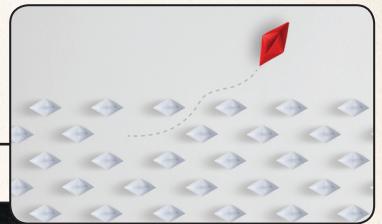
The *YOU* lessons will help you Connect , Grow , Serve , and Go . Look for these icons throughout this issue. They will help you check and maintain your spiritual health.

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# A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR **MARK CROSTON**

This year is the 25th anniversary of Black Church Leadership and Family Conference, and it's not too late for you to join us this summer! It's a family reunion, vacation, ministry training, leadership networking, kids camp, mountain getaway, and marriage retreat all rolled into one. All of this is set in a beautiful mountain retreat with plenty of down time to enjoy the sites.



Kids and teens will have an exceptional experience at Centri-Kid Day Camp and youth FUGE. Women and men will enjoy their own unique breakouts designed to refresh the soul. Church pastors, leaders, and volunteers will have an array of seminar choices to help them grow in their ministry areas, along with a wide selection of topical discussions that address the needs of today's black churches.

World-class preachers, teachers, and worship leaders will rev us up in the morning and bring it home at night. This year among our key presenters are:

- **Emory Berry**, Lead Pastor, Greenforest Community Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia
- **Dhati Lewis**, Lead Pastor, Blueprint Church, Atlanta, Georgia
- **H. B. Charles**, Lead Pastor, Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida
- **Breonus Mitchell**, Lead Pastor, Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee.
- **Joe Pace**, Pastor of Worship Arts, Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida
- **Allen "Al" Hollie**, Youth Pastor, Greenforest Community Church, Decatur, Georgia
- **Marshelle Wilburn**, Urban Missionary, Extraordinary Grace, San Pablo, California
- **Bianca Howard**, Director of Children and Youth, Zion Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia
- **Vernon Gordon**, Lead Pastor, The Life Church, Richmond, Virginia

Join us for this all-in-one, energizing week, July 16-20, 2018 at LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center, near Asheville, North Carolina. This year's theme is "Still Turning Things Around." "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:22).

Learn more at [www.lifeway.com/blackchurchlife](http://www.lifeway.com/blackchurchlife). There is full program for every member of the family! I hope to get to meet you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.



Dr. Mark A. Croston Sr.  
YOU General Editor  
National Director of Black Church Partnerships  
[www.lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife](http://www.lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife)

# A WORD FROM THE EDITOR...



As Christians, we should constantly look for ways to continue building up our life in Christ. Having an active prayer life, staying in the Word, and maintaining strong relationships with other believers helps us do so. However, many Christians do not have a firm biblical foundation on which to build. Without this foundation Christian living can be impossible. And that's what makes this quarter's lessons even more important.

You will study three dynamic units that focus on: (1) understanding basic truths about who you are and how you should live, (2) providing answers to basic questions about the certainty of your salvation, and (3) eternity as one of two final destination options for all humanity. None of it is complicated!

Also, for the fourth consecutive year I'm excited to introduce you to the newest additions to the YOU writer team. They represent the states of Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. Each writer successfully completed the intensive writer development track offered at the 2017 Black Church Leadership and Family Conference. The daily readings, online midweek sermon starters, and feature articles that accompany each unit of study this quarter were written almost exclusively by these talented writers. Kudos and congratulations on a job well done!

As always, my earnest prayer is that these lessons will encourage, inspire, and motivate you to draw closer to God and fellow believers as you continue to build up your life in Christ.

Because of His love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beverly". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit [www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline](http://www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline).

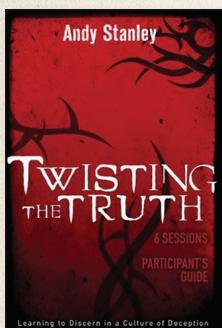
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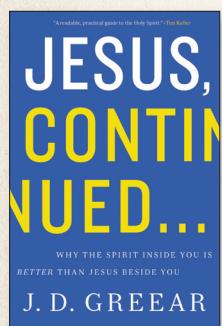
# SUGGESTED DISCIPLE-MAKING RESOURCES

Here's a list of resources you can use to deepen your understanding of the units of study this quarter. These resources complement the lessons for this quarter and can be used for small group study, midweek study, or personal Bible study.



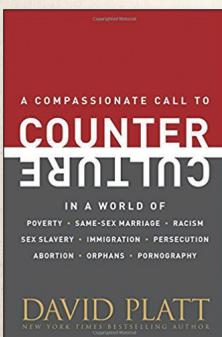
## TWISTING THE TRUTH (FOR UNIT 1)

*Twisting the Truth: Learning to Discern in a Culture of Deception* by Andy Stanley is a six-session small group Bible study that will help your group understand how truth gets twisted and distorted and how that impacts our lives. Throughout the study Stanley exposes four destructive and all-too-prevalent lies about authority, pain, sex, and sin. They're deceptions powerful enough to ruin our relationships, our lives, even our eternities—but only if we let them. With his gift for straight, to-the-heart communication, Andy Stanley helps us exchange falsehoods for truths that can turn our lives completely around.



## JESUS, CONTINUED (FOR UNIT 2)

*Jesus Continued: Why the Spirit Inside You Is Better than Jesus Beside You* by J. D. Greear is an eight-session Bible study created to help you relate to the Holy Spirit in new ways. Over the course of this study, you'll see how you can have a satisfying, powerful relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. The study will help students replace guilt-driven missional living with gift-driven empowered living, overcome the paralysis of indecision by experiencing God's promised presence, and spark fresh and dynamic Spirit-driven faith.



## COUNTER CULTURE (FOR UNIT 3)

*Counter Culture* by David Platt is a six-session Bible study, a pointed yet winsome call for readers to faithfully follow Christ in countercultural ways. There will be a cost. There will be a reward. Do Christians in the contemporary church have the courage to counter the culture? This study will help you understand timeless biblical truth as the lens through which you view current events and trends, equip you to share what you believe in a compassionate yet uncompromising way, and inspire you to take action and live out your faith.

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# REGIONAL

## OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE



**Kettering Baptist Church  
Upper Marlboro, Maryland**

Once again a dynamic team of pastors, preachers, ministers of Christian education, higher educators, discipleship/evangelism leaders, and other ministry leaders came together for a three-day period to develop the YOU Summer 2018 lesson outlines. This strategy has proved to be beneficial in promoting a sense of church ownership for the Bible study curriculum while undergirding the continuous evolution of YOU as an easy-to-use, culturally relevant, and biblically strong Bible study resource for small and large groups.

We were honored to have Kettering Baptist Church, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, serve as the host church for the conference, held September 19–21, 2017. Senior Pastor Bucas Sterling III, Rev. André Williams (education pastor), and Rhonda Caldwell (operations and administration officer) served on the conference planning team.

Additional participants included Dr. Mark Croston (YOU general editor); Dr. Juanita Brower (assistant pastor, Forestville New Redeemer Baptist Church); Rev. Richard Kennard (minister of education, Forestville New Redeemer Baptist Church); Dr. Nathaniel Thomas (senior pastor, Forestville New Redeemer Baptist Church); Rev. Harold Dugger, Sr. (pastor, First Baptist Church of Capitol Heights); Geralette Magruder (director of missions, First Baptist Church of Capitol Heights); Rev. Quintin Few Sr. (pastor, First Baptist Church of Suitland); Linda Logan (VBS director, Emmanuel Baptist Church—Laurel); Rev. Ralph C. Wilson Jr. (pastor, Faith Fellowship Community Church—Laurel); and Deacon Clinton Wiggins (Adult Sunday School teacher, Sharon Bible Fellowship—Lanham). Beverly Sonnier (YOU content editor) served as the conference facilitator. Each participant contributed a fresh perspective along with biblical insights to the conference. Their extensive input will impact the lives of countless people for Christ and aid in kingdom building. And for that the YOU team is grateful and thankful!



# Unit 1

## The Truth Starts Here

Truth

## A Bible Study on Establishing Basic Truths

Many of us have met folks who like to show off their intelligence. Perhaps they brag about earning a degree from a prestigious university. Maybe they dominate conversations or try to use vocabulary that's above our heads. Not so with Smokie Norful. When he sings "I Know Too Much About Him," he's not boasting about how much knowledge he has. Instead, Norful is telling us that because he has experienced God personally, no one can sway him into doubting Him.

Unlike Norful, some people don't know much about God. They have doubts and questions. Many want to build their lives in Christ but aren't sure where to start. Without a firm biblical foundation,

though, Christian living can be impossible.

From the beginning God set forth basic truths that affirm our worth, define who we are, and explain how we should live. For the next four weeks, we'll examine themes in the Book of Genesis that help us answer questions like:

- Why am I here?
- What happens when sin creeps in?
- How should I live in today's culture?
- How do I fulfill God's calling for my life?

It's study time! When it comes to learning about God, we really can't know too much about Him.

# I'm No Accident

**Background Passage:** Genesis 1–2

**Lesson Passages:** Genesis 1:1,26–28; 2:7,9,18,22–24

**The Question:** Why am I here?  
**The Point:** God has a purpose for my life.

## LESSON PASSAGES

### GENESIS 1:1,26-28

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

.....

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will **a** rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and **\*** subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”

### GENESIS 2:7,9,18,22-24

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

.....

<sup>9</sup> The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the **b** tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the **\*** tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

.....

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a **c** helper corresponding to him.”

.....

<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man.

<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.

## KEY WORDS

**a Rule:** “Reign over” (NLT); “have dominion over” (KJV); “authority” (AMP); “be responsible for” (MSG). God brought animals to Adam for him to name (Gen. 2:19-20). According to ancient naming practices in Israel, this would signify the man’s rule over the creatures.

**b Tree of Life:** A life-sustaining tree that grew in the middle of the garden of Eden. For Adam and Eve, eating the fruit of this tree led to eternal life. Every reference to the tree of life in Proverbs is figurative in nature (e.g., Prov. 11:30; 15:4).

**c Helper:** “Helper [one who balances him—a counterpart]” (AMP); “help meet” (KJV). Term describing the woman whom God built from Adam’s body and gave to him as a wife.

For more information about key words (**\***), visit the glossary on pages 160–161.

## MEMORY VERSE

### Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

# I'm No Accident

Genesis 1:1,26-28; 2:7,9,18,22-24

## Why am I here?



### UNIT 1 LESSON 1

Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life* has been printed in more than eighty-five languages and has sold more than thirty-two million copies. It offers a countercultural message that points people to God for answers to the age-old question: Why am I here? Though people falsely associate their significance with fame, lofty achievements, and material belongings, our esteem is bolstered when we realize how and why God made us. In today's lesson the creation account assures us God has a purpose for every human life.

## Focal Passage Outline

### CREATED ON PURPOSE

(Gen. 1:1,26-27)

### CREATED FOR A PURPOSE

(Gen. 1:28; 2:7,9)

### CREATED WITH PURPOSE

(Gen. 2:18,22-24)

## CREATED ON PURPOSE GENESIS 1:1,26-27

**Read Genesis 1:1.** People have turned to hearsay, folklore, one another, and other things in an attempt to rationalize how the universe began and how humankind and other creatures came to be. However, those who believe in these things often oppose the account in the Bible and reveal lack of faith in God as Creator. Surely the creation of the universe and its contents can't be reduced to such things.

**How has, hearsay, or folklore challenged the way you think about biblical truths? How do you stay grounded in faith in God as the Creator?**

**Read Genesis 1:26.** God was intentional about His creation of humankind. Sure, He created other life, but He uniquely made man and woman in His image (v. 26a). Consequently, we have a special purpose and exclusive privileges in part because God gave us authority (see **a** rule, Key Words, p. 11) over everything else He made. Additionally, as God's image bearers, we not only have minds that enable us to reason and to analyze abstract concepts, but we also possess the ability to experience emotions and make

choices. Because Scripture teaches that God also created us in His likeness (v. 26), we are able to reflect some of the spiritual attributes that characterize God's nature. (See Did You Know? on p. 14 for more on God's image and likeness.)

**Which attributes of God are clearly evident in your life? In what areas can you reflect a better image of your Creator?**

**Read Genesis 1:27.** When studying the creation of humankind, two questions often surface: Is God both male and female? Does He have a physical body that we resemble? In short, no. However, a deeper look at verse 27 (see Memory Verse, p. 11) allows for elaboration. The Hebrew term for “man” (v. 27a) is used throughout the Old Testament to refer to humankind. The term isn't exclusive to males. So when God made “them” (v. 27c), the text refers to men and women. It doesn't suggest a bisexual nature in humans or in God. Christians generally agree God is asexual (i.e., neither male, female, nor a combination of the two). Besides, “God is spirit” (John 4:24); He isn't contained by a physical body. Still, He created people in His image—meaning both males and females are capable of reflecting His intangible characteristics. Plus, we've been given great responsibility as stewards of all He's put in our care. As a result, our potential exceeds all else in creation. What a weighty truth! Undoubtedly, every human life is significant.

**How might you assure yourself that your life has significance and purpose when you've failed at something and feel “less than”?**

## CREATED FOR A PURPOSE GENESIS 1:28; 2:7,9

**Read Genesis 1:28; 2:7,9.** Most parents assign chores to their children but only after equipping them with the proper instructions and resources. Similarly, when our heavenly Father created the first man and woman, He made them managers of His creation under His ultimate rule. He enabled them to procreate and provided them with the means to thrive. He even planted a garden and provided a water source (2:8,10). Essentially, God ensured humanity's physical needs were met. (To learn about two significant trees in the garden see **tree of life** in Key Words, p. 11 and **\* tree of the knowledge of good and evil** in Key Words Glossary, pp. 160–161.)



## Diggin' Deeper



## Living Being

Scripture teaches us that Adam was a “living being” (Gen. 2:7) or “living soul” (KJV), signifying that his personhood had been established. The Hebrew phrase translated “living being” was also translated “living creatures” in Genesis 1:20,24 where it referred to birds, land animals, and sea creatures. Humans and animals share a similarity: They were both formed from the ground. Unlike animals, though, humans bear God's image, have received God's own breath, and have special authority to rule over creation.

- How have some ethnic or socio-economic groups been treated like animals?
- What does the creation reveal about humanity's value?

# I'm No Accident

Genesis 1:1,26-28; 2:7,9,18,22-24



## Did you know?

The Hebrew words translated “image” and “likeness” (Gen. 1:26) are generally considered synonymous. However, scholars have found nuances between the two terms. Interestingly, this word pairing appears only in Genesis. Some suggest that since “image” brings idolatry to mind, “likeness” helped detract from such pagan imagery. This would have been especially crucial during ancient times when idols were believed to bear the spirit of the entity after which they were fashioned. Even those who bowed down to a king would likely do the same to his image.

- **How does Psalm 8 support Genesis 1:26-27?**

**How does the nation's use of natural and renewable resources affect you? What steps can you take toward being a better steward of God's provisions?**

Most parents groom their children to be productive citizens. Work is necessary. It was a God-given task (Gen. 2:15) even before the curse. Sin caused it to be a taxing chore (Gen. 3:17-19a).

**How might your work ethic change if you viewed every assignment as if you were God's trustee on earth?**

The first documented workweek was fruitful. On day six God took great care in creating the first person (Adam). God formed Adam from the dust of the ground as a potter fashions a lump of clay into something beautiful and useful. Then He gave Adam His own breath, and the man became “a living being” (v. 7) (see *Diggin' Deeper*, p. 13). At that moment Adam—and all humanity thereafter—would have a spiritual connection to God that would require righteousness and moral responsibility. Contrary to many pet lovers' beliefs, animals do not share this connection.

**When people try to dehumanize you, how do you remain confident that you have purpose and value?**

## CREATED WITH PURPOSE GENESIS 2:18,22-24

**Read Genesis 2:18,22-24.** Whether we are single, widowed, or have a spouse who's on a military deployment, many of us know what it's like to feel lonely or to experience the awkwardness of being a “third wheel.” Living among animals and plant life exclusively, Adam could relate. After all, God created him with a desire to function in a relationship and deemed it “not good for the man to be alone” (v.18).

**What temptations are more prevalent for you when you're alone? How are you purposeful about having healthy interactions with others?**

## Live It!

From Play-Doh to Post-it Notes, many products exist because of some mishap. Thankfully humankind is no accident. So, why are we here? God intentionally made us—male and female—to be in relationship with Him and with others. He also commands us to be responsible managers of His resources. Because we bear His image and likeness, we have significance and distinction. Thankfully, our Creator works in perfection.

This week, spend time with family or friends. Read a devotional together, play games, or enjoy dinner without electronic devices. Honor God by responsibly managing and nurturing the relationships He entrusts to us.

God created Adam a suitable companion (see Key Word **C** helper, p. 11)—a woman—for relationship and intimacy. God crafted her from Adam's rib to signify the unity the two shared, especially since they were made of the same substance. Adam was thrilled. "This one, at last," he said, "is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (v. 23), emphasizing the importance of male and female. God came through for Adam. He took great care in creating the perfect match for him, and in the process He satisfied Adam's desire for companionship. Indeed, the first man and woman were significant to God. We are too.

### **In modern culture, how have gender-specific roles and expectations changed? Why does it matter?**

These Scriptures shed light on God's original intent for a marriage relationship between a man and a woman. They also imply the importance of our interaction with others. Our relationships come with great responsibility. Are we using them to "encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thess. 5:11). Remember, we all need people to help us, hold us accountable, and stretch us. When it comes to our spiritual journeys, God doesn't encourage solo travel.

## **SO WHAT? How does this apply to me?**

Do you have your mom's eyes or your dad's nose? From generation to generation, people are intrigued by familial resemblances. But do you ever take time to ensure you're properly reflecting your heavenly Father's likeness? Use the following questions to help determine whether you accurately portray the spiritual attributes the Creator has given you.

- *In what or whom do you find significance? How has modern culture influenced your response?*
- *How do your views about same-sex marriage, feminism, and gender bias align with God's truth?*
- *What does sin do to the image of God inherent in humanity? What are you doing to strengthen your relationship with Him?*



### 1. MASTERPIECES

*Genesis 1:27*

A jigsaw puzzle is easier to assemble once you see the picture on the front of the box. God was intentional with every part of His creation. Each piece fit perfectly, but you are special. You were made in His image. Your life came through God's breath. You were more than just the picture on the front of the puzzle box. You were given authority over God's creation, created by Him to reflect Him.

What a masterpiece!

***Master, I am alive today because You first loved me. Your resurrection plan saved me.***

### 2. A MASTER PLAN

*Psalms 8:3-6*

The birth announcement of a child is exciting news. God made man and woman to manage all He created. His assignment included being fruitful, multiplying, working, and ruling. In Luke 9:1, Jesus summoned the twelve and "gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal disease." Then He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God. Aren't you glad He gave us life not by accident but with purpose? Enjoy it.

***Father, in response to your plans and purpose, I say, "Yes and amen."***

# DAILY READINGS

### 3. THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

*Genesis 1:26*

When you look at yourself in the mirror, know that God made you with a great plan in mind. Your body is a masterpiece. Your mind functions with amazing capabilities. Your soul can make decisions that are life changing. When you look in the mirror, see how your heart has changed because God loves you. His image reflects things that are good, kind, and of a good report. Think on these things as you see Him in you.

***Lord Jesus, draw me near to You and allow me to reflect Your radiance.***

### 4. A TRUE CONNECTION

*Genesis 2:7*

The breath that connects us came from God. The blood of Jesus saved us from our sinful anger and unrighteousness. Let's face it, without Jesus redeeming us, we would be disconnected from God's purpose. Through a relationship with God, our full potential can flourish. Our faith through Jesus truly connects us to the plan God has for us.

God grants us grace to stay connected by ruling over sin and not allowing sin to rule us. He is our connection.

***Jesus, my Redeemer, I praise You for the priceless debt You paid, freeing me from my sins.***



# BEFORE YOU TEACH

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

## STEP 1 PREACH TO THE RIGHT CHOIR.

Leaders can inadvertently spark a gripe session by voicing complaints in front of the group. Weeks of negativity can dampen the group's spirit and put off learners. Try taking up valid concerns with those in authority. And offer viable solutions in which you can take part. By all means, don't burden learners with the small stuff. Otherwise, you're just preaching to the wrong choir.

## STEP 2 CONSIDER VISITING THE ATM.

Since the Object Lesson requires a \$20 bill, consider making a trip to the ATM during the week. If this isn't possible, don't worry. Consider borrowing one from a learner for the duration of the illustration, or ask a volunteer to stand before the class with a \$20 bill in plain view. If all else fails, learners can simply practice visualization. It's OK to modify to make it work!

## STEP 3 KNOW BUZZWORDS.

Today's lesson touches on topics that are more controversial now than ever (e.g., human sexuality, significance of human life, and the definition of marriage). Do your research and learn buzzwords that enable you to understand questions from learners who may be considerably younger or older than you. Terms and phrases that may have been generally acceptable several decades ago may be offensive now. Also, be prepared to encourage learners to use sensitive language.

## STEP 4 GIVE THEM BULLETS.

Email regular updates to your group to make them aware of church activities, fellowships, and outreach opportunities. Keep in mind that when leaders send email notices or lengthy updates too frequently, recipients tend to mark them as spam or hit "delete." Instead, send bulleted lists.



## BACK

Welcome members and guests. Invite several volunteers to discuss highlights from the last lesson based on Psalm 32 (Unit 3, Lesson 4, "It's Personal," Spring 2018, pp. 93–97). To jump-start the discussion, remind learners of The Question and The Point (p. 93). End the review with a one-sentence summary of your own to complement volunteers' responses. Allot time for learners to share about their experiences from last week's Live It! challenge (p. 97). Then transition to the new unit of study.

# YOU OBJECT LESSON



## \$20 BILL

**Display a \$20 bill. Ask:** *What are some of its distinguishing characteristics? What happens to its value if I crumple it, spill coffee on it, or smear it with dirt?*  
**Say:** *Its worth isn't dependent on the dirty places it has been. As long as it bears the official images and markings of the appropriate issuing organization, its value stays intact.* Emphasize that similarly, all people have significance because we bear the image of God—our Creator. **Say:** *The next time you see a \$20 bill, remember that although sin may mar God's image in humanity, our value and potential do not diminish. You matter!*

## INTRODUCTION

**Ask:** *What silly things have you done to prove your significance or to get noticed?* Allow time for learners to share their responses aloud. Emphasize that we all like to make good impressions, whether we're going on a first date, interviewing for a job, or talking to an authoritative figure. **Say:** *After all, our image is important. But the truth is, all of humanity is significant because God created us in His image, fashioned us for relationship, and made us trustees of all His other creation.*

Transition to the new quarter of study by referring to the unit title, “The Truth Starts Here,” and summarizing the Unit 1 Overview on page 10. Read aloud The Question, “Why am I here?” and The Point, “God has a purpose for my life.” Then invite a learner to read aloud the lesson introduction on page 12.

## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### CREATED ON PURPOSE GENESIS 1:1,26-27

- **Ask:** *What are some common misconceptions you've heard about the origin of people and the universe?* Discuss. **Invite a learner to read Genesis 1:1.** Emphasize that the phrase “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1) points to the beginning of the universe and doesn't attempt to establish the point at which God's existence began. **Say:** *God is eternal and self-existent. He alone is the Creator of the universe.*
- **Read Genesis 1:26-27 aloud.** Direct learners' attention to Did You Know? (p. 14) and focus on the concept of the image and likeness of God. For additional insight, download the lesson's supplemental *Biblical Illustrator* article, “In His Image.” Log on to [www.lifeway.com/YOU](http://www.lifeway.com/YOU). Click on the DOWNLOADABLES tab for additional study helps for Unit 1, Lesson 1.
- Summarize paragraph 3 under the heading “Created on Purpose” (p. 13) and lead the group in a discussion about “male and female” (v. 27c) as it relates to God and humanity. Direct learners' attention to the Key Word **rule** (p. 11).

### CREATED FOR A PURPOSE GENESIS 1:28; 2:7,9

- **Invite a learner to read Genesis 1:28; 2:7,9.** Highlight verse 7 that describes how Adam was created. Point out that because of God's image in people, we have a spiritual and physical combination no other created entity has. God expects righteousness from us as a result. Dogs, no matter how intelligent, do not have this connection with the Creator. **Summarize Diggin' Deeper** (p. 13) **about living beings.** Gather into pairs to complete the bulleted questions that follow it.
- Share the connection between sin, work, and the two trees mentioned in verse 9. (See Key Words **tree of the knowledge of good and evil** and **tree of life**, pp. 11, 160–161.) **Ask:** *When you're tempted to think that your labor for God's purposes is in vain, what keeps you going?* Discuss responses. Explain how these

# I'M NO ACCIDENT (TEACHING PLAN)

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

verses (Gen. 1:28; 2:7,9) portray God as Provider and people as stewards.

- Direct learners' attention to **subdue** (see Key Words, p.

11). **Say:** *People are suffering, hungry, and homeless; yet we can still trust that God provides what we need to carry out His work.*

## CREATED WITH PURPOSE

### GENESIS 2:18, 22-24

- **Read Genesis 2:18,22-24 aloud.** The significance of males and females is outlined in these verses. **Ask question 2 under the heading “Created with Purpose” (p. 15) that asks:** *“In modern culture, how have gender-specific roles and expectations changed? Why does it matter?”* Discuss how God created the woman and how it accentuated the unity between her and Adam.
- The prioritization of the relationships between a husband, his parents, and his wife are established in verse 24. **Ask:** *What kinds of problems arise when the proper family order is neglected?* Invite a learner to read the final paragraph under this heading (p. 15) beginning with “These Scriptures shed.” Discuss ways these verses also symbolize the importance of nurturing relationships with others.

## SO WHAT? HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

You've gotten the environment just right—the lighting, the setting, the people, the pose—and then, it happens: the photobomb. God's creation seemed just right, too, until He saw Adam alone and deemed it “not good” (Gen. 2:18). God, the perfect Provider, fashioned a companion for Adam and established the institution of marriage between man and woman. Use these questions to lead learners to ponder their significance to God and their devotion to His purpose.

- *How are your views of human sexuality and marriage biblical? worldly? What needs to change?*
- *How have you dealt with loneliness in a way that honors God? Do you trust His plan for your life whether it involves marriage or singleness? Why or why not?*
- *In what or whom do you find significance? How has modern culture influenced your response?*
- *Sometimes abusive, sinful scenarios or careless actions result in unplanned pregnancies and births.*

*How might we reassure ourselves that no person is here accidentally or without purpose in God's eyes?*

## CLOSE THE SESSION

*Genesis takes us back to basic truth. Remind learners that we are here because God created us on purpose, for a purpose, and with purpose. For that we know we have significance. Lead learners in memorizing the Memory Verse for this lesson, Genesis 1:27. (A memory card can be cut out on page 99.) Encourage learners to ponder briefly why God created them for this specific time in history. Then challenge learners to complete the Live It! challenge on page 15 this week. Dismiss the session in prayer, thanking God for godly relationships, for each individual represented in your group, and for creating us in His image.*

## I'm No Accident

**Lesson Passages:** Genesis 1:1,26-28; 2:7,9,18,22-24

**The Question:** Why am I here?

**The Point:** God has a purpose for my life.

*This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “Why am I here?” and drive home this one truth: God has a purpose for my life.*

### FOCUS ON THESE POINTS

#### **Created on Purpose (Gen. 1:1,26-27)**

Human beings were no accidental creation. Though people were the last in the sequence of creatures and objects God made in Genesis, they can't be considered an afterthought. God was intentional and considered humankind the highlight of His creation. He planned for humankind to be responsible trustees of His creation while populating the earth (v. 26).

“In the beginning” (v. 1) refers to the time when God began to create. The special Hebrew term that was translated “created” in verse 1 appears three times in verse 27 regarding God's creation of man, and thus, connotes man's significance. God further emphasized human beings' significance by giving us a special relationship and purpose.

Because people are made in God's “image” and “likeness” (v. 26), we have special attributes that set us apart for relationship with others and a connection to God. For example, we have the ability to use our intellect, make choices, experience emotions, and be morally aware.

#### **Created for a Purpose (Gen. 1:28; 2:7,9)**

When God created the first human, Genesis 2:7 states that God “formed” him. The words “create” (1:27) and “formed” (v. 7) are similar in that they can both indicate divine activity.

The imagery in verse 7 is especially appropriate for God's work in that God made the first person “out of the dust from the ground” (v. 7). One important, additional detail is underscored in the creation of human beings: God breathed His own breath into the man's nostrils, enabling him to become a living being, a person who would have elevated status over everything else God created because

human beings were made with God's own breath.

Verse 9 describes two specific trees in a central location in the garden that were pleasing to the eyes and good for food. One was the tree of life. The fruit of this tree was life-sustaining. Consequently, we can assume the first humans were not created immortal because of their dependence on this fruit for life. However, God ensured the tree was easily accessible.

The other named tree in the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God forbade the first humans to eat from this tree. Doing so would bring about their death (2:17). This tree would serve as a test of the first humans' loyalty to God.

#### **Created with Purpose (Gen. 2:18,22-24)**

Although God repeatedly declared His work good in chapter 1, by chapter 2 He had declared something “not good” (v. 18). The part that wasn't yet good included man living in solitude. True, man had a relationship with his Creator, but that wasn't sufficient. God made humans to desire relationship with other compatible human beings. For Adam that meant marriage was necessary. Although God made a “helper” (v. 18) for him, we mustn't assume that marriage is a universal solution or that single people are incomplete.

To end Adam's dilemma, God fashioned a woman from one of Adam's ribs (v. 22). This pointed to the relationship and unity the two—man and woman—would share. Adam's description, “Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (v. 23), underscored this fact. The man called his helper “woman.” It wasn't until later (Gen. 3:20), that Adam would give his helper the name Eve.

The words in verse 24 confirm the application of truth that intimacy is designed for a man and woman. The word “bonds” (v. 24) or “cleaves” (KJV) gives the idea of melding together. The idea of becoming one flesh (v. 24) refers to intimacy, revealing what naturally occurs in a marriage relationship between husband and wife. God's plan for intimacy between the first man and first woman models what should happen in a marriage.



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# KEY WORDS GLOSSARY

The first page of every lesson provides an overview of the lesson, including the lesson title, lesson passages, and key words from the biblical text. The key words marked with a \* have been explained more fully in this glossary.

**Affliction:** Arises from outside a person and leads to the inner experience of anguish; refers to that which crushes or oppresses. (Unit 2, Lesson 4)

**Away from the Lord:** God remains with His people (Matt. 28:18-20); however, His presence while we are on earth is only a shadow of what we will experience in heaven. (Unit 3, Lesson 4)

**Commandments:** A reference to the Ten Commandments, though Jesus only specifically mentioned the ones governing a person's relationships with other people. (Unit 3, Lesson 2)

**Does not confess Jesus:** Shows that John was aware of people speaking by the power of spirits other than the Holy Spirit. (Unit 2, Lesson 1)

**Famine or nakedness:** Resulting from persecution of the church, being deprived of clothing and food because of exile or confiscation of land. (Unit 2, Lesson 4)

**Follow me:** Jesus was heading toward suffering in Jerusalem. Those who followed Him would be heading toward danger as well. (Unit 3, Lesson 2)

**Gates:** Each gate represented one tribe of Israel. The twelve foundations represented each of the apostles. See verse 14. (Unit 3, Lesson 3)

**Go:** The man needed to obey to be healed; stresses the close connection between obedience and experiencing the powerful work of God. (Unit 2, Lesson 5)

**Grieved:** Literally means God "was grieved to His heart." When it comes to sin, not only is God grieved, but He is also "burdened" and "wearied"

(Isa. 43:24); "crushed" (Ezek. 6:9); and "disgusted" (Ps. 95:10). (Unit 1, Lesson 3)

**Groan:** Greek wording usually relating to pain or agony. Here it likely refers to a deep longing for what will not pass away. (Unit 3, Lesson 4)

**He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!":** "He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (KJV); "I know nothing about that one way or the other. But I know one thing for sure: I was blind . . . I now see" (MSG). (Unit 2, Lesson 5)

**His disciples:** John the Baptist's disciples. They practiced fasting (Mark 2:18), and he taught them to pray (Luke 11:1). (Unit 2, Lesson 2)

**Humans:** "People" (NIV); "sons of men" (AMP); "children of men" (KJV). Refers to Adam's descendants. (Unit 1, Lesson 4)

**I don't know:** Cain's untruthful response when God interrogated him after he committed murder. God's interrogation was meant to give Cain a chance to confess his guilt. In contrast, when God interrogated Adam (Gen. 3:12), he confessed his sin. (Unit 1, Lesson 2)

**"I'm the One":** The change in the formerly blind man was so remarkable his neighbors could not believe he was the same person. (Unit 2, Lesson 5)

**Leprosy:** A skin disorder the Hebrews believed rendered its victims ceremonially unclean—that is, unfit to worship God. Lepers were isolated from the

rest of the community so the members of the community could maintain their status as worshipers. (Unit 2, Lesson 2)

**Name:** In Hebrew, names defined the character and reputation of a person. God often changed people's names to reflect their new destiny: Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). Individuals could change their names to reflect a change in their character, too: Naomi (pleasant) to Mara (bitter) (Ruth 1:20). (Unit 1, Lesson 4)

**Offering:** Cain's offering was a type of voluntary gift usually given to a person in authority. Later in the Old Testament are descriptions of at least five main categories of offerings. Three of them are voluntary or freewill: burnt, grain (bloodless), and peace offerings. (Unit 1, Lesson 2)

**One who is in the world:** Probably refers to the devil, whether in person or as represented by his spiritual and human servants (Unit 2, Lesson 1)

**Out of heaven:** The heavenly origin of the city emphasizes that this is God's kingdom for His people. (Unit 3, Lesson 3)

**Persecution:** Pursuit; systematic attempts to separate God's children from the love of Jesus. (Unit 2, Lesson 4)

**Pharisees:** "Separated ones," either separated from the masses or separated to study and interpret the law. Saw obedience to the law as the way to God. Opposed Jesus because He refused to accept their interpretations of the oral law. (Unit 2, Lesson 5)

**Place of torment:** One of the greatest motivators for evangelism should be the horrors in the afterlife that await those who reject Christ. (Unit 3, Lesson 1)

**Repaid:** Our works do not determine our salvation, but they do determine our rewards (see 1 Cor. 3:12-15). (Unit 3, Lesson 4)

**Righteous:** Antonym to the word *corrupt* and refers to a person who is honest, fair, and virtuous. Here God promises to spare Noah and his household because of his righteousness. The concept of saving many people for the sake of a few righteous ones is reiterated in Genesis 18:24-32. (Unit 1, Lesson 3)

**Soft clothes:** A sign of wealth. (Unit 2, Lesson 2)

**Spirit:** The Spirit's presence in Christians, the mark of Christ's ownership. (Unit 2, Lesson 4)

**Subdue:** To bring under control. God's command to subdue the earth was part of His blessing on humanity that granted people the approval to responsibly use its resources to populate the earth, serve God, and flourish. (Unit 1, Lesson 1)

**This is how you know:** A phrase that introduces a quality of Christianity that helps us determine our relationship with God. Occurs in five verses in 1 John. (Unit 2, Lesson 1)

**Tree of . . . good and evil:** The only tree in the garden of Eden from which God forbade the first man and woman to eat. It gave divine knowledge. When the two sinned by eating from the tree, they were denied access to the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24). As a result, they—and all of humanity—were subject to death. The "knowledge" they gained was a revelation of their guilt, disgrace, and condemnation. (Unit 1, Lesson 1)

**Wilderness:** Uninhabitable land; a fearful place in which to get lost (Ps. 107:4-9). John the Baptist was in the wilderness until the time of his public ministry. There he ate locusts and wild honey and dressed in camel's hair. (Unit 2, Lesson 2)

## COMING NEXT QUARTER



### UNIT 1 GROW Authentic Discipleship

- Lesson 1 Who, Me?  
Luke 5:1-11
- Lesson 2 Follow the Leader  
Luke 6:31-34,37,41-42,46-47
- Lesson 3 All In  
Luke 9:57-62; 10:1-3
- Lesson 4 Who Is Number One?  
Luke 14:25-33
-  Lesson 5 \*Everybody Ought to Know  
Luke 24:31-32,44-47,48-53



### UNIT 2 GROW Turn It Around

- Lesson 1 From Scared to Healthy Self-Esteem  
Judges 6:13-15,36-38; 7:13-15
- Lesson 2 From Depression to Hope  
1 Kings 19:1-7,15-18
- Lesson 3 From Stress to Blessed  
Psalm 142:1-7
- Lesson 4 From Addict to All Right  
Luke 15:11-14,17-24



### UNIT 3 SERVE One Mission, One Message

- Lesson 1 The Church on Mission  
Acts 2:41-47
- Lesson 2 What's in a Name?  
Acts 4:12-21
- Lesson 3 You've Been Sent!  
Acts 13:1-12
- Lesson 4 On Mission, No Regrets  
Acts 26:4,6-7,14,19-20,26-29

\*This lesson has a **GO!** emphasis.

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