



masterwork

FALL 2023

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life?
The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

F is for FORGIVENESS

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

A is for AVAILABLE

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

I is for IMPOSSIBLE

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T is for TURN

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"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. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

H is for HEAVEN

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

Table of Contents

How to Use	4
------------------	---

THE GOD WHO IS THERE

SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF	Introduction	6
SEPTEMBER 3, 2023	Session 1: The God Who Made Everything	7
SEPTEMBER 10, 2023	Session 2: The God Who Does Not Wipe Out Rebels	22
SEPTEMBER 17, 2023	Session 3: The God Who Writes His Own Agreements	36
SEPTEMBER 24, 2023	Session 4: The God Who Legislates	50
OCTOBER 1, 2023	Session 5: The God Who Reigns	64
OCTOBER 8, 2023	Session 6: The God Who Is Unfathomably Wise	78
OCTOBER 15, 2023	Session 7: The God Who Becomes a Human Being	92
OCTOBER 22, 2023	Session 8: The God Who Grants New Birth	106
OCTOBER 29, 2023	Session 9: The God Who Dies—And Lives Again	120

LIVE NO LIES

	Introduction	135
NOVEMBER 5, 2023	Session 10: The Truth About Lies	136
NOVEMBER 12, 2023	Session 11: Dezinformatsiya	150
NOVEMBER 19, 2023	Session 12: The Slavery of Freedom	164
NOVEMBER 26, 2023	Session 13: The Brutal Honesty About Normal	178
	Coming Next Quarter	193

MasterWork: Essential Messages from God's Servants

Fall, 2023

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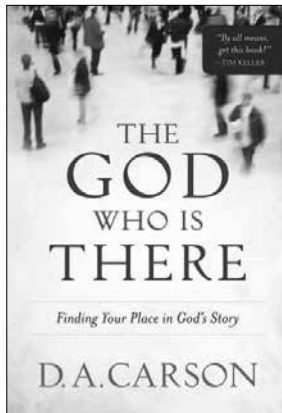
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Books of Study

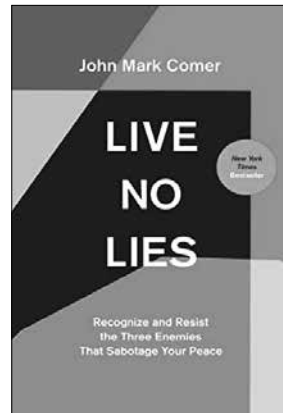
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The God Who Is There

D. A. Carson

Baker Books
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Live No Lies

John Mark Comer

WaterBrook
ISBN: 9780525653127

How to Use

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

1. Read Day One through Day Five prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the lesson. The main point of the lesson and the goal are printed on the leader guide pages at the end of each lesson. (See p. 19.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to weave the seamless revelation of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning in their walk with Christ

Key Bible Passages: Genesis 1–11

Leader Guide

- Read and study the key Bible passages listed at the top of the teaching plan.
- Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book.

- One option is to follow the leader guide at the end of each lesson.
- A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the lessons. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.

written by forty authors over 1,600 years. Sixty-six books tell one seamless story about how God redeems us, and has a future for us. Let's explore the beautiful story of Scripture. How does this story fit so successfully in with Christians who were

DISCUSS

When might a visit to a library be overwhelming? When might it be exciting?

Discussion Questions

- Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at masterwork.lifeway.com to fit your group.
- Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
- Arrive early, praying for the group time.

SECTION 1

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to weave the seamless narrative of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning of their walk with Christ.

Key Bible Passages: Genesis 1-11

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Intellie adults to indicate if they've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series. **Ask** to be possible to read the books or watch the movies out of order and still enjoy them? What's the value of reading or watching them in order?

Note reading or watching serial stories in order gives us a better grasp of the overall story and aids in deeper understanding of the characters and plot. **Intellie** us how how all the stories fit together. **State:** That's how Scripture is as well. We can know and love individual Bible stories but understanding how they fit together into one seamless narrative can bring the Bible's truth into much greater focus.

STEP 2 - Getting Started

Intellie a volunteer to read the first two sentences of Day One (p. 7).

Relate the author's experience of not understanding what Christians were talking about and how she gained a clearer grasp of the Bible (p. 7).

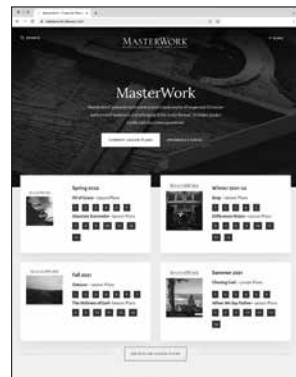
Intellie volunteers to share what has helped them understand the Bible better.

Relate to author's desire for readers to see Scripture's overarching story and its characters and themes to come to life. **Relate** to author's challenge by reading the Day One paragraph (p. 10) beginning with, "Before we start..."

Discuss Day One activity 2 (p. 8).

17

Leader Guide



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Study Series: Seamless
Author: Angie Smith

Lesson Title: "The Beginning" (pp. 6-13)
Session 1
September 4, 2022

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to weave the seamless narrative of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning of their walk with Christ.

Key Bible Passages: Genesis 1-11

Before the Session

1. Prayers 780 (Step 2)
2. Karkar 780 (Step 2)

During the Session

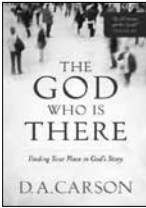
Step 1: Title

Intellie adults to indicate if they've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series. **Ask** to be possible to read the books or watch the movies out of order and still enjoy them? What's the value of reading or watching them in order?

Note reading or watching serial stories in order gives us a better grasp of the overall story and aids in deeper understanding of the characters and plot. **Intellie** us how how all the stories fit together. **State:** That's how Scripture is as well. We can know and love individual Bible stories but understanding how they fit together into one seamless narrative can bring the Bible's truth into much greater focus.

8

Customizable Teaching Plan



THE GOD WHO IS THERE



ABOUT THE WRITERS

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Amy Summers wrote the activities, discussion questions, and teaching plan for this study. Amy is a graduate of Baylor University with a degree in social work, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a master's degree in religious education. She and her husband have three adult children and three grandchildren.

If you know nothing at all about what the Bible says, the study you are now holding in your hands is for you.

If you have recently become interested in God or the Bible or Jesus, but quite frankly you find the mass of material rather daunting and do not know where to begin, this study is for you.

If you have been attending a Christian church for many years in an indifferent fashion—it's a nice extracurricular activity now and then—but have recently come to the conclusion you really ought to understand more than you do, this study is for you.

If you have quite a few of the pieces of the Bible stored in your mind, but have no idea how the exodus relates to the exile or why the New Testament is called the New Testament, this study is for you.

If in your experience the Bible has lots of data, but you do not see how it conveys God to you or introduces Jesus in a fashion that is utterly humbling and transforming, this study is for you.

This study is not for everyone. The person who does not want more than a bumper sticker introduction to Christianity may find this study a bit much.

What I have tried to do here is run through the Bible in nine sessions. Each session focuses on one or more passages from the Bible, unpacks it a little, and tries to build connections with the context, drawing the lines together to show how they converge in Jesus. By and large I have assumed very little prior acquaintance with the Bible. What I do assume, however, is that a reader will get hold of a Bible and have it near at hand. In the first session I will tell you how to find your way around in a Bible.

THE GOD WHO MADE EVERYTHING

Day 1

Foundation Documents

There was a time in the Western world when many people had read the Bible reasonably thoroughly and therefore knew how it was put together. Even those who were atheists were, shall I say, *Christian* atheists. That is to say, the God they disbelieved in was the God of the Bible. Their understanding of the God whom they found unbelievable was in some measure shaped by their reading of the Bible. But today, of course, a rising number of people really do not know how the Bible works at all. They have never read it, or at least have never read it closely. So the first place to begin in trying to understand what Christianity is, and who Jesus is, is to start again to read the Bible, to examine Christianity's foundation documents. There are sixty-six of them, written over a period of fifteen hundred years in three languages. The biggest part was written in Hebrew; a very tiny part was written in a language like Hebrew called Aramaic; and the last part was written in Greek. All of our Bibles today are translations of what was originally given in these languages.

These sixty-six foundation documents are highly diverse in form and literary genre. Moreover, these sixty-six documents, often called the "books" of the Bible, are surprisingly varied in terms of accessibility; some parts you can read very easily, while other parts are full of archaic symbolism, symbolism that has to be explained because it belongs to a time and place very different from our own.

DISCUSS

What do you do with personal documents such as birth/marriage certificates, car titles, or passports and why?

1. Look over the sixty-six books listed in a Bible's table of contents.

Identify a book you:

Really love

Understand pretty well

Find intimidating

Feel is irrelevant

NOTE

The Christian claim . . . is that this Bible discloses the God who is there.

All of these foundation documents, these “books,” have been put together to constitute “the Book.” That’s all “Bible” means. It’s the Book. We who are Christians insist God has disclosed Himself supremely in the pages of these documents. In these sessions I shall sketch in what the Bible says so as to make sense of what Christianity means and looks like if it is constrained by its own foundation documents. Sometimes Christians themselves abandon these foundation documents and thus betray, sometimes unwittingly, the very heritage they have received. The Christian claim, however, is that this Bible discloses the God who is there.

In this first session we reflect on “the God who made everything” with the first book in the Bible, Genesis.

DISCUSS

What is the wisest thing to do with the foundation documents of Christianity? Why?

Genesis 1–2

You might want to read through these two short chapters, because in what follows I shall be picking up parts of them.

2. Read Genesis 1:1-5. What did God say? What did God see?

Now read Genesis 1:26,31. What did God say? What did God see?

In successive days, various things are created by this God who says, “Let there be this” or “Let there be that.” And occasionally a refrain is added: “And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:10,25). Chapter 2 offers a kind of expansion on the creation of human beings that we’ll come to in due course.

Day 2

Genesis 1–2 and Science

Because much of twenty-first-century culture is convinced that contemporary scientific thought is fundamentally incompatible with the opening chapters of Genesis, I had better say something about the approach I adopt here. Four things to note:

1. There is more ambiguity in the interpretation of these chapters than some Christians recognize. Some Christians are convinced, for example, that this pair of chapters, read responsibly, insists that the world is not more than four thousand years older than the coming of Jesus. Others insist it is entirely compatible with vast ages. Some think each “day” represents an age. Others infer there is an enormous gap between Genesis 1:1 and verse 2. Others see the seven-day week of Genesis 1 as a literary device rather than describing a literal week. In short, there are significant differences of opinion among Christians, let alone among those who want to write the entire account off. I hold that the Genesis account is a mixed genre that feels like history and really does give us some historical particulars. At the same time, however, it is full of demonstrable symbolism. Sorting out what is symbolic and what is not is very difficult.

2. There is more ambiguity in the claims of science than some scientists recognize. Recently the media have focused on the fresh literary writings that comprise what is now sometimes called “the new atheism.” All the books of the new atheism are based on the assumption of philosophical materialism: all that exists is matter, energy, space, and time—nothing else. So anything that claims to belong to some domain that cannot be reduced to these realities must necessarily be dismissed.

Yet I personally know many front-rank scientists who are Christians. I have spoken at many universities, and one of the interesting things I discover is that if I attend nearby local churches and meet some of the faculty in the universities who belong to these local churches and who are committed believers, their numbers tend to be made up of more science and math professors and the like than arts, psychology, and English literature professors. It is simply not the case that anyone who is a scientist cannot be a Christian. More debate is going on than is sometimes perceived.¹

DISCUSS

Do you have to throw out all scientific thought and discoveries to believe in the creation account of Genesis 1-2? Explain your reasoning.

Even if your understanding of origins belongs to the dominant modern paradigm in which our entire known universe developed out of a big bang that took place something like fifteen billion years ago from an unimaginably condensed mass and became our universe, there is an obvious question to ask: “Where did that highly condensed material come from?” In other words, there are complications in the domain of science that suggest that science does *not* constitute a solid wall or barrier that makes it impossible for Christians who bow to the authority of Scripture to learn from science or talk intelligently with each other.

3. Whatever one makes of current debates over intelligent design—one of the dominant debates of the day—there is a version of it that I find almost inescapable. Various groups—mostly Christians but some non-Christians as well—have pointed to what they call “irreducible complexity,” that is, structures in nature and in the human being that are so complex that it is statistically impossible that they could have come to be by chance.

1. What created thing is so complex it makes you think, “There has to be a Creator, because this just couldn’t happen by chance”?

To appeal to a chance mutation, or to the mere selection of the fittest, or to any of the other appeals that spring from Darwinism, simply makes no sense. Living systems have an irreducible complexity to them that makes it statistically impossible that all of the necessary but highly improbable steps were taken at the same time—and without such statistically impossible simultaneity, life could not be. What this suggests, it is argued, is the need for a designer.

What I find interesting is that many writers who do not in any sense claim to be Christians sometimes speak of their marvel at the unimaginable complexity and splendor of the universe—a marvel that rises to the level of what might be called “worship.” Although they may be unabashed philosophical materialists in their orientation, they are so impressed by the complexity and glory of it all that they almost begin to treat nature as a god. From a Christian point of view their instincts are jolly good—except

that there is a God who has disclosed Himself in the glory of what we call nature. If you begin with this God, the testimony to His greatness in what we see all around us is heart stopping. It takes an enormous act of will on the part of even the most cynical of scientists instead to look at it all and say, “Ah, it’s just physics. Stop admiring it. There’s no design. It’s just molecules bumping into molecules.”

2. Read Romans 1:18-23. What did the apostle Paul call this philosophical materialism?

What is the only logical response to the divine power and attributes clearly revealed in creation?

4. Finally, let me say where I am coming from as we work through these texts. A Christian thinker named Francis Schaeffer argued that one way to minimize some of the endless debates that cloud discussions of origins is by asking, “What is the least that Genesis 1 and the following chapters must be saying for the rest of the Bible to make any sense?” I will suggest there is an irreducible minimum these chapters must be saying for the Bible to have any coherence at all, and that is what I shall lay out for you in the next few days.

Day 3

What Do Genesis 1–2 Tell Us?, Part 1

Some Things About God

1. *God simply is.* The Bible does not begin with a long set of arguments to prove the existence of God. It just begins, “In the beginning God” (Gen. 1:1). Now, if human beings are the test of everything, this makes no sense at all because then we have the right to sit back and judge whether it is likely that God exists, to evaluate the evidence and come out with a

DISCUSS

What is the bare minimum we must believe about God for the rest of the Bible to make sense to us? Why is that?

certain probability that perhaps a god of some sort or another exists. Thus we become the judges of God. But the God of the Bible is not like that. The Bible begins simply but dramatically: “In the beginning God.” He is. He is not the object whom we evaluate. He is the Creator who has made us, which changes all the dynamics.

2. *God made everything that is non-God.* God made everything else. This introduces an irreducible distinction between Creator and creature. God is not a creature; correspondingly, in this absolute sense, we are not creators. If someone were to ask, “Yes, but where did God come from?” the answer the Bible gives is that His existence is not dependent on anything or anyone else. *My* existence is dependent, finally, on Him; *His* existence is self-existence. God has no cause; He just is. He always has been. By contrast, everything else in the universe began somewhere. God made it all. That means everything in the universe apart from God is finally dependent upon God.

3. *There is only one of Him.* This emerges strongly in the Bible. God openly says, “Let there be this,” “Let there be that,” “God made everything,” “He saw that it was very good.” Later on in the Bible this point is stressed again and again (Deut. 6:4). There is only one of Him. Yet even in this first chapter of the Bible there is a hint of complexity to His oneness. We read through the account of creation “God said this,” “God said that.” Then when it comes to human beings, we read, “Then God said, ‘Let *us* make human beings in *our* image, in *our* likeness” (Gen. 1:26, emphasis added). That could be a royal we. But it is striking that it is introduced when humans are made. We dare not build too much on these details just yet. It is strange language just the same, however, especially in a Bible that insists again and again that there is but one God and that God is one. However we understand the plural, the Bible here says God makes creatures who bear His image (1:26-27)

4. *God is a talking God.* The first action described under this general rubric “God created the heavens and the earth” is “God said, ‘Let there be light” (1:3). I suppose one could understand this as a metaphorical way of saying God brought the heavens and earth into being by His power, that He did not actually utter any words. Could be. Except that once Adam and Eve are made, He actually addresses them and gives them some responsibilities. He *speaks* to them.

1. Read Genesis 1:27-30. How would you describe the way God spoke to Adam and Eve? Why?

The God of the Bible in the very first chapter is not some abstract “unmoved mover,” some spirit impossible to define, some ground of all beings. He has personality and discloses Himself in words human beings understand. Through the whole Bible, that picture of God constantly recurs. He is a talking God.

5. *Everything God makes is good—very good.* As the account progresses, you discover that there is no hint in Genesis 1–2 of death or decay, of butchery, malice, hate, one-upmanship, arrogance, pride, or destruction. There is no hint of any of this. Everything is very good. Regardless of all the difficulty we have understanding God’s sovereignty in a world where there is suffering and evil, the Bible insists that God is good, and the foundations of this claim are already here in the first chapter.

6. *God comes to an end of His creative work, and He rests.* That is, He stops His work of creation. The Bible does not mean God is tired. That is rather misreading the text. He completes His week of creation and stops. He rests and designates this seventh day in a special way.

7. *The creation proclaims His greatness and glory.* Another facet of God’s self-disclosure in these first two chapters of the Bible is only implied in the account, but it is teased out in later chapters of the Bible. The more we know about the created order—its vastness, its complexity, its physics—the more our response ought to be adoration and genuine awe before the Creator. This response surfaces many times in the Bible. (For instance, in Ps. 19:1-4.)

2. Read Psalm 19:1-4. If possible, go outside, look up at the sky and recite aloud Psalm 19:1. What did you think/feel?

Day 4

What Do Genesis 1–2 Tell Us?, Part 2

Some Things About Human Beings

1. *We are made in the image of God.*

1. Read Genesis 1:27. Put some thought into this: What does it mean to be “made in the image of God”?

Philosophers and theologians have written long tomes on that matter. But if you were reading the Bible for the first time and did not know anything about these debates, I suspect your approach to this “image of God” language would be a little simpler. It becomes a kind of master concept that is filled in as you read on in the Bible. The point at this early juncture is that as God’s image-bearers, we reflect God. The ways in which we reflect God will get filled in as the Bible unfolds.

In what ways do human beings start reflecting God, even in this first chapter? God is a talking God. He speaks to human beings, *and they speak back to Him*. There is also something of creativity. Of course, our creativity is not like God’s. In this chapter, God makes things out of nothing. We cannot do that. But implanted in human beings, as a reflection of God, is a certain creativity. By and large creativity is not characteristic of elephants, black widow spiders, or rocks.

Human beings enjoy a capacity to work. God is depicted as engaged in the work of creation. He gives the man and woman certain responsibilities to work in this world, to tend the garden. Work is teased out throughout all of Scripture as something intrinsically honorable. Christians should never descend to the place where working is “secular,” somehow divorced from God. Rather, if this is God’s universe and we are made in His image, then as we work, our work too reflects Him and is offered back up to Him with integrity and gratitude. Work is significant because we are made in the image of God. Work carried out in this way changes our perspective about who we are.

2. Read the following verses and state how they may change or enhance the way you regard your regular work responsibilities.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

Ecclesiastes 5:19-20

We must recognize, of course, that there are unbridgeable differences between God and us. God never tells us to be something we are intrinsically incapable of being. He never says to us, “Be self-existent, for I am self-existent.” He does not say, “Be omnipotent, for I am omnipotent.” Nevertheless, in many domains, precisely because we *have* been created in the image of God, we are *supposed* to mirror Him. That is why, later on in the Bible, God will say, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev. 11:44-45). We are to reflect God in certain ways. We have been made in His image and charged with the responsibility of looking after His creation. In so doing, we are reflecting something of God.

Human beings were made in the image of God, and as His image-bearers we were made to work, to rule, to serve as God’s stewards, to be surpassingly God-centered.

NOTE

Human beings were made in the image of God, and as His image-bearers we were made to work, to rule, to serve as God’s stewards, to be surpassingly God-centered.

2. *We human beings were made male and female.* We are told, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). But in Genesis 2, where the creation of humans is expanded upon, not only what they hold in common, but how they are different is exposed: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (2:18). Genesis 2:19-24 explain.

3. Read Genesis 2:19-24. How does this passage provide clarity in a world that is so confused about gender identity, value, and roles?

While the opening chapters insist human beings, male and female, were equally made in the image of God, they also insist the woman was made as a helper. But the man and the woman come together in one union, a sexual union, a marriage union. The two becoming one. This is a rather different picture of marriage than some others offer. Here is a vision of marriage that ultimately becomes a model of other relationships unpacked in later chapters in the Bible.

3. *The man and his wife were innocent.* “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Gen. 2:25). What does nakedness signify here at the end of Genesis 2? Do you know that there is a theory to nudist colonies? The best nudist colonies—if I may speak of nudist colonies on a moral scale—have a certain philosophy that if you could be completely open and transparent in one part of your life, then sooner or later you could foster openness and transparency in every part of your life. So they begin with physical transparency—complete openness, nakedness—and maybe down the road we’ll all become wonderfully open, candid, honest, caring, loving people. It never works because we have so much to be ashamed of; there is so much we need to hide. In this account, however, Adam and Eve have nothing to hide and therefore nothing to be ashamed of. No wonder the very word “Eden” means “delight.”

DISCUSS

What does Genesis 1–2 tell us about ourselves as human beings? How should that cause us to regard ourselves and others?

Day 5

What Do Genesis 1–2 Tell Us?, Part 3

Some Things About How Genesis 1–2 Fit

I am merely going to prime the pump, prepare the way for some of the things teased out in the rest of the study.

1. *These two chapters constitute the necessary background to Genesis 3.* Without understanding how good everything is, we cannot fully grasp what happens in the next chapter, sometimes called “the fall,” the onset of massive rebellion.

2. *This doctrine of creation actually surfaces again in the Bible, in passages written after the coming of Jesus.* However, this notion of creation is transformed: what is promised is a new creation and ultimately a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. The terminology for it is drawn from Genesis 1–2.

3. *Above all, this vision shapes our worldview.* For example, in pagan polytheism (that is, in views of the world in which there are many gods), the gods have different domains of operation: there is a god or goddess of war, another of the sea, another of love, and so forth. Here is one God who has made it all. This differs, for example, from hedonism, where the point of human existence is, quite simply, to find as much pleasure as you possibly can, by whatever means possible, before you die. But here the pursuit of pleasure is bound up with God Himself. We were made initially *by* God and *for* God, and the best and highest pleasure is a God-centeredness that secular hedonists cannot possibly imagine. Their pleasures are too fleeting, too small, too narrow.

Alternatively, pantheism teaches us that the entire material world and godness are all part of the same thing. There is no differentiation. Thus I am god and you are god and we are all in this god-existence together. This is a frame of reference that many adopt. It simply is not the worldview of the Bible. God made everything, and we human beings who have been made in His image find our greatest fulfillment, purpose, happiness, and integrity in being rightly related to Him.

DISCUSS

Why is it essential that we believe the truths of Genesis 1–2 if we're going to believe the truths of the rest of Scripture, including the gospel?

NOTE

God made everything, and we human beings who have been made in His image find our greatest fulfillment, purpose, happiness, and integrity in being rightly related to Him.

1. Read Jeremiah 32:17. Why is it essential for your own journey of faith to be confident in the truths of Genesis 1–2?

4. *What the Bible says about creation is what grounds the notion of human accountability and responsibility. Why should I obey God? If He wants to take me in directions that I do not like, who is He to tell me what to do? Surely I am free to choose—unless He designed me. In that case I owe Him everything, such that if I do not see it that way then I am out of line with my Maker. I am fighting against who I’m designed to be as well as against the God who made me.*

2. Read Isaiah 45:9-12. Who does the Bible proclaim a “woe” against and why?

What implications does that have your life—what changes or adjustments might you need to make to avoid receiving the woe?

All of human accountability and responsibility before God is grounded in the first instance in creation. He made us, and we owe Him. If we do not recognize this simple truth, then, according to the Bible, that blindness is itself a mark of how alienated from Him we are. It is for our good that we recognize it, not because He is the supreme bully, but because without Him we would not even be here, and we will certainly have to give an account to Him.

Now we are set up for the Bible’s analysis of what is wrong with us.

1. The author references numerous works of both “the new atheism” and refutations of them. Secure a copy of the book to see specific titles.

DISCUSS

What are specific ways we can secure the truths of Genesis 1–2 in our hearts and minds?

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Genesis 1–2 tell us some important, reliable truths about God and ourselves, and lays the foundation for the rest of Scripture.

Focus on this goal: To help adults rest confident in the truths of Genesis 1–2

Key Bible Passage: Genesis 1–2

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask participants what tools they use to find their way around a large building and/or city. **Determine** some dangers in not using navigational tools.

Ask: *Why might it be dangerous to wander through Scripture without using reliable tools to find our way around?* **State** this study can be a valuable tool in helping us find our way around the Bible. **Use** the introduction (p. 6) to **briefly describe** who this study is for and what it seeks to accomplish.

Request someone read the Day One Note (p. 8). **Declare:** *We need to know our way around Scripture so we can know the God who is there.*

STEP 2 - Foundation Documents

Ask: *When you use GPS do you just enter the location and start driving, or do you read through the steps to get a general idea of the route?* **State** Day One identifies specifics that can help us gain a general idea of how the Bible is arranged.

Urge adults to turn to the table of contents in a Bible and identify how many books are in the Bible and the different literary genres among those books (for example, history, poetry and wisdom, prophetic, Gospels, epistles). **Ask** which of these books can help us “understand what Christianity is, and who Jesus is” (p. 7) and why.

Note every book in the Old and New Testament are “Christianity’s foundation documents” (p. 7) so it’s important we learn to navigate our way through all the books of “the Book.” The best way to do that is to start at the beginning.

Discuss Day One, activity 2 (p. 8).

STEP 3 - Genesis 1–2 and Science

Ask: *Why might believers hesitate to declare that they believe Genesis 1–2?*

Explain Day Two examines the debated correlation between Genesis 1–2 and science and explains the approach the author takes toward the Creation account.

Request a volunteer read Genesis 1:6-25. **Ask:** *What literary genre would you attribute to these verses—science textbook, theological commentary, worship song, or something else? Why? Do we have to fully understand what is literal and symbolic in the biblical creation account to be able to rest confidently in its truth? Explain.* **Use** the Day Two paragraph (p. 9) beginning with “There is more ambiguity” to add to the discussion.

Relate the author’s experience of finding more science than liberal arts professors in churches (p. 9) and **evaluate** why that might be so. **Invite** a volunteer to read Hebrews 11:3. **Analyze** why believing Genesis 1–2 requires faith *and* rational thinking.

Invite responses to Day Two, activities 1 (p. 10) and 2 (p. 11).

Summarize the last paragraph of Day Two (p. 11).

STEP 4 - What Do Genesis 1–2 Tell Us?, Part 1

Ask: *Does the Bible assume or argue the existence of God? What leads you to that conclusion? How could a lot of anxiety be alleviated if people only believed that God simply is and that He created everything else that is non-God?*

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 6:4-5. **Evaluate** the relationship between believing there is only one God and loving God with our entire being.

Consider the significance of God being a talking God. **Discuss** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 13). **Ask:** *What is a logical response to a God who speaks?*

Request someone read point 5 in Day Three (p. 13). **Consider** why it is vital that Christians believe that. **Ask** a volunteer to read Genesis 2:1-3. **Ask** why God rested. **Ask:** *What does that tell you about God and about His creation?*

Invite volunteers to share how they see God's glory in His created handiwork.

STEP 5 - What Do Genesis 1–2 Tell Us?, Part 2

State Genesis 1–2 doesn't just relate truths about God; it states truths about us. **Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 (p. 14). **Use** the Day Four remarks (pp. 14-15) to add to the discussion.

Discuss Day Four, activity 2 (p. 15). **Read** the paragraph (p. 16) beginning with "We human beings were made male and female." **Lead** a gentle, loving discussion of Day Four, activity 3 (p. 16).

Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 2:25. **Explore** what that indicates about the first man and woman.

STEP 6 - What Do Genesis 1–2 Tell Us?, Part 3

Lead a discussion with: *Why must we understand how good everything was at the beginning before we can begin to navigate the rest of Scripture? How does what a person believes about creation shape that person's worldview? How does a person's worldview shape his or her life now and for all eternity? What is the only worldview that leads to an abundant, eternal life?*

Invite someone to read the Note in Day Five (p. 17). **Discuss** Day Five, activity 1 (p. 18). **Read** the italicized point 4 (p. 18) and **guide** the group to discuss Day Five, activity 2 (p. 18).

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Ask: *How can we rest confidently in the truths of Genesis 1–2? What are our lives like when we do?*

Close in prayer.