

BAPTISTWAY ADULT BIBLE STUDY GUIDE®

*Created for  
Relationships*

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*Created for Relationships—BaptistWay Adult Bible Study Guide®*

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## *How to Make the Best Use of This Issue*

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

- A. Do all of the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might do this in one or more of the following ways:
  - In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on page 9 and on the first page of each lesson.

- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
  - If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
  - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) on the **Adults—Bible Studies** page.
  - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
  - Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- B. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- C. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org).
- D. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1-866-249-1799 or e-mail [baptistway@texasbaptists.org](mailto:baptistway@texasbaptists.org) to order the *Premium Adult Online Bible Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org). The price of these comments for the entire study is \$6 for individuals and \$25 for a group of five. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Adult Online Bible Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
- E. Additional teaching plans are also available in electronic format (PDF) by calling 1-866-249-1799. The price of these additional teaching plans for the entire study is \$5 for an individual and \$20 for a group of five. A church or class that participates in our

advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Adult Online Teaching Plans* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

- F. You also may want to get the enrichment teaching help that is provided on the Internet by the *Baptist Standard* at [www.baptiststandard.com](http://www.baptiststandard.com). (Other class participants may find this information helpful, too.) The *Baptist Standard* is available online for an annual subscription rate of \$10. Subscribe online at [www.baptiststandard.com](http://www.baptiststandard.com) or call 214-630-4571. (A free thirty-day trial subscription is currently available.)
- G. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

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## *Writers for This Study Guide*

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# Created for Relationships

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## *Introducing*

# *CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIPS*

### Approaching This Study of Created for Relationships

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Have you ever wondered why you are here? Why has God placed you on the earth at this particular time? What is the purpose of your life? These are some weighty questions indeed. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”<sup>1</sup> The Bible speaks to these questions through the words of Jesus. He sums up the Old Testament by stating in Matthew 22:37–40:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

This has come to be known as the Great Commandment. Jesus also provides marching orders for his followers through the Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:18–20:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Loving God and loving our neighbors is an outgrowth of our development as disciples of Jesus, and it motivates our efforts to make disciples of others. It seems that one of the overarching themes found in the Bible is that of *relationships*. God has created us for a relationship with him through his Son and our savior Jesus Christ, and he has also created us to be in relationship with others. In Genesis 2:18 God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” It wasn’t then and it isn’t now.

This study will focus on thirteen key relationships, beginning with our relationship with God. More than ever the outside world needs to see Christians whose lives are grounded in and guided by their relationship with God. As Christ followers, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17–21). One of our primary purposes is to help people reconcile with God, whether they are family members, friends, neighbors, employers, or others in our community.

Each summer our BaptistWay Bible Study series focuses on a biblical theme. In the fall we explore material from the New Testament, in the winter we examine one of the Gospels, and in the spring we delve into an Old Testament study. For a complete list of our studies see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org).

## Studying These Lessons

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Relationships can provide the most rewarding and meaningful experiences in our lives as well as some of the most trying and frustrating experiences. What is the current state of our relationships? How are we to respond to challenges in our relationships? What are some keys to building strong and lasting relationships?

The Bible provides wisdom and guidance for us in the area of relationships and this study will provide direction and suggestions for repairing and strengthening our relationships. Use the study to compare the current condition of your relationships in each area addressed with the biblical counsel. Focus on the Main Idea and Study Aim for each lesson and look for ways to practically apply the scriptural truths to your everyday life.

In the beginning God created . . .

And he created us for relationships. When God was forming his chosen people into the nation of Israel he codified instructions about

relationships in the Ten Commandments: four that address our relationship with God, and six that address our relationships with others. Luke 2:52 tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor *with God and men*. Relationships are the key to a rich and meaningful life.

So how are we to relate with God, ourselves, and one another in the 21st century? Does the Bible still have anything relevant to say about our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, employers, government, church leaders, fellow Christians, and non-Christians? Absolutely it does. Our prayer is that this thirteen-week journey will shed fresh light on your relationships and will encourage you to embrace God's wisdom so that you can glorify him and enjoy your relationship with him and others.

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**CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIPS**

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Lesson 1	God	Genesis 1:26–31; Romans 5:1–11
Lesson 2	Self	1 Samuel 16:1–7; Psalm 139
Lesson 3	Spouse	Ephesians 5:21–33
Lesson 4	Children	Psalm 127:3–5; Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:1–9
Lesson 5	Parents	Exodus 20:12; Luke 2:45–52; John 19:25–27
Lesson 6	Friends	Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; 1 Samuel 20:1–17, 27–42
Lesson 7	Enemies	Luke 6:27–36; Romans 12:17–21
Lesson 8	Neighbors/ Community	Exodus 20:13–17; Leviticus 19:16–18; Zechariah 7:8–10; Matthew 5:13–16
Lesson 9	Employer	Ephesians 6:5–9; Colossians 3:22–25; 1 Timothy 6:1–2; Titus 2:9–11
Lesson 10	Government	Romans 13:1–7; 1 Timothy 2:1–4;
Lesson 11	Church Leaders	Ephesians 4:11–16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; Hebrews 13:17–18
Lesson 12	Fellow Christians	Acts 4:32–37; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Galatians 6:9–10; Hebrews 10:24–25
Lesson 13	Non-Christians	2 Corinthians 5:11–21; 1 Peter 3:15–16; Colossians 4:2–6

## Additional Resources for Studying *Created for Relationships*<sup>2</sup>

- Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Abridged Edition: New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994.
- Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman. *Life Application New Testament Commentary*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001.
- Gary D. Chapman. *Covenant Marriage*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003.
- Lon Fendall. *Citizenship: A Christian Calling*. Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2003.
- Craig S. Keener. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Robert S. McGee. *The Search for Significance: Seeing Your True Worth Through God's Eyes*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- Les and Leslie Parrott. *Relationships: An Open and Honest Guide to Making Bad Relationships Better and Good Relationships Great*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.
- A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament: Concise Edition*. Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2000.
- Melissa Travathan and Sissy Goff. *Modern Parents, Vintage Values*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
- Spiros Zodhiates and Warren Baker. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996.

## NOTES

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1. [http://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/wsc/wsc\\_001.html](http://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/wsc/wsc_001.html). Accessed 7/31/14.
2. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.

# LESSON ONE

## *God*

### **FOCAL TEXT**

Genesis 1:26–31;  
Romans 5:1–11

### **BACKGROUND**

Genesis 1:26–31;  
Romans 5:1–11

### **MAIN IDEA**

God created us for relationships and Jesus has reconciled our relationship with God.

### **QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

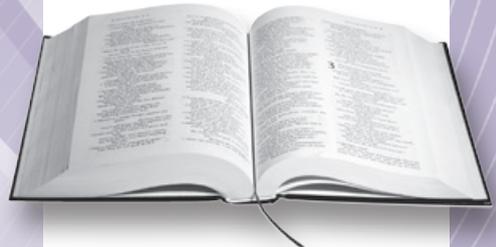
What does it mean to be created in God's image, and how has Jesus reconciled our relationship with God?

### **STUDY AIM**

To comprehend what it means to be created in God's image and to understand how Jesus provides reconciliation with God

### **QUICK READ**

God has revealed himself as a personal God. He created human beings in his image with a unique capacity to live in relationship with each other and with him.



## Introduction

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Seated on a mat outside a mud-brick hut in West Africa, I was engaged in a serious theological discussion with the local imam (Muslim cleric) in the village. Through a translator, we compared the teachings of the Bible with those of the Koran. Because my group had been to this village numerous times, the two of us shared a great deal of trust and therefore could talk freely.

At one point in the discussion, the imam asked about the purpose of humanity. “Why did God place us here?” He acknowledged me as a “holy man” for Americans, even though he didn’t quite understand my role as a pastor. In spite of his limited exposure to Christianity, he still pondered the deeper questions of life. Why did he pose such an important, life-altering question? Because he is human.

The imam’s question is one of purpose. Why *did* God create each of us? What was God’s original intent? What was his desire for humanity? How did he express those desires in the design of his creation? Furthermore, what happened to God’s plan? Why is there so much brokenness in the human story? What went wrong? And further still, what did God do about this brokenness? How has God responded to the presence of sin and evil?

These profound questions are worth exploring. We can’t definitively answer all of them in one Bible study, but we can lay a strong foundation for deeper understanding. The only way we can understand our purpose is in light of God’s character. The Bible paints a portrait of God as a personal being. He is not an abstract being existent in another far-off dimension. He is not aloof or indifferent. Instead, the Bible reveals God as active and engaged in his creation. He speaks, acts, feels, loves, listens, cares, and knows.<sup>1</sup>

## GENESIS 1:26–31

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,

in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

<sup>29</sup> Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

## ROMANS 5:1–11

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

## God is a Complex Being (Genesis 1:26–31)

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Genesis 1:26–31 contains material essential to understanding the entire Bible. The Creator of the universe decided to populate planet earth with human beings. These beings have been specifically designed with unique capabilities and responsibilities. They obviously matter to God since he spoke directly only to them. He did not address the rest of creation. However, he spoke to human beings.

Genesis 1:26 utilizes the plural in reference to God. Notice the phrase “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.” The Old Testament often refers to God in the plural (we, our, us), rather than the singular (I, mine, me). For example, the Bible opens with a declarative statement, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Hebrew word for “God” in this verse is *Elohim*, which is a plural noun. However, the word for “create” is in the singular. In addition, this passage also utilizes the pronouns “us” and “our” with reference to God. Some scholars have proposed that the plural usage refers to the heavenly host surrounding and accompanying God at creation. However, this would imply that God had “assistance” in the creative process. This idea is not in agreement with the rest of the Bible (See Isaiah 40:25–26; Hebrews 1:10–12). The Bible clearly presents God as the sole Creator of the universe.

Other scholars believe that the writer used plural nouns and pronouns to express God’s “plural majesty.” To these scholars, the plural allowed

### THE IMAGO DEI

In the New Testament, the Greek word for “image” is *character*. This word referred to a stamp or an impression on a seal or coin. It was a representation of the original design. Jesus Christ is the perfect representation of God the Father (Heb. 1:1–4). Because Jesus was sinless, he most accurately bore God’s image and reflected God’s glory in our world. Our sin hinders us from fully bearing the image of God. However, God is at work in us to restore his image. His power can transform our brokenness and sinfulness so we can reflect his glory. He desires to conform us to the likeness of his Son (Rom. 8:29). We will never be perfect. We will never be completely free from sin this side of heaven. But, we can become more like Jesus.

the writer of Genesis to express the inexpressible, since there is no way to describe God adequately and fully within the limits of language. Thus, one way to set God apart is to refer to him in the plural. However, using the plural to show God's majesty falls short. The name *Elohim* is a common word for God in the Old Testament. It occurs about 4,000 times in the Old Testament. Further, another word for God is *Adonai*, translated as "Lord." It is also a plural noun and is found numerous times in the Old Testament (Gen. 18:30; Exodus 34:23; Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 45:11; 114:7; Malachi 1:6).

The plural nouns and pronouns used in the Old Testament point to a greater reality expressed in the New Testament and further developed in early Christian theology. God exists in eternity, in community *and* plurality. And yet, he is one God. The New Testament clearly references the Father, Son, and Spirit as all being divine (Matthew 28:16–20; John 8:58; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; Ephesians 4:4–6). God is a complex Being. He is one God who exists in plurality. He is not like us. He is God. Sovereign. Majestic. Glorious. Complex.

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### Humanity: God's Crowning Achievement (Genesis 1:26–31)

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Genesis 1:26–31 also reveals abiding truths about human beings. God created human beings in his image (*Imago Dei* in Latin) and according to his likeness. "Image" and "likeness" are two closely related terms. Though some scholars break down and analyze these two words to draw up distinctions between them, they communicate truths that reinforce one another. Being created in God's image and likeness means humans are moral creatures capable of knowing right and wrong. They have the unique capacity to represent God and his causes in creation. This truth speaks to the unique nature of human beings. They are the only image-bearers of God in the vastness of creation.

God's image and likeness also enable human beings to relate to God. God expressed his desire for this relationship in Genesis 1:27–30. He spoke to human beings. He expressed his intent for them to multiply and rule over the earth. Humans hold the capacity to know God and follow his commands. Human beings have the unique opportunity to respond directly to his desires. In other words, God created human beings and invited them to live in relationship with him.

Since God exists in eternity in relationship as a complex being of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he designed human beings as relational creatures as well. He created humanity as male and female. The complementary nature of the genders is evident from the very beginning (Gen. 2:18–25). Both genders express more fully God’s image and likeness than one gender alone. He invited human beings to join him in caring for and ruling over his creation. Humans care for it since it belongs to him—and so do we. Once God brought human beings into existence, blessed them and charged them, he pronounced his assessment of his creative activity. It was all very good (1:31).

### The Answer to Our Brokenness (Romans 5:1–11)

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Genesis 2 ends in perfection. Human beings (Adam and Eve) existed in perfect harmony with God, creation, and each other. However, the third chapter of the Bible introduces the tragic story of humanity’s rebellion and sin, for which God judged his unique creatures. They would still bear his image in the world (Gen. 9:6), but their ability to do so as God desired had been marred.

They were cast out of the Garden of Eden to live in a newly broken world. However, God had already set into place a plan to restore his crowning creation back to himself. His answer to the judgment, separation, guilt, and pain of humanity’s rebellion was redemption. God decided to redeem humanity from final judgment in hell and to offer humans the opportunity to serve his purposes on earth. However, redemption required sin’s debt to be paid—at the highest price.

In Romans 5:1–11, Paul explained God’s plan of redemption and rescue. Death and separation from God-deserving punishment characterized the human predicament (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1–3). Not surprisingly, God responded personally. He sent his Son, the perfect Image-Bearer (Heb. 1:1–4), to bring peace between human beings and God.

Humanity stands condemned before God. However, because of the person and work of Jesus Christ, we can be justified. We can be declared innocent before God because Jesus, the Son of God, has atoned for humanity’s sin. God no longer declares us guilty if we call on Christ as Savior. He justifies those who turn to him in repentance and faith.

## TO DO THIS WEEK:

1. People around you live with a broken relationship with God. Many of them have never heard about God at all. You can demonstrate to them how a redeemed person lives. God can use you at home, at work, and in your everyday life to represent him.
2. Ask God to reveal to you his perspective of your family, workplace, neighborhood, church, and circle of friends. Ask him to show you how to bear his image in each of these spheres of influence.

Justification is a concept from the legal realm of the first century. God the Judge has declared us innocent, not because of what we have accomplished, but because of Christ's work on the cross.

Romans 5:1–11 explains the beautiful effects of this justification. The saving work of Christ has brought peace (5:1). Christians can now rejoice in hope (5:2). We are not separated from God any longer. We have been granted access to him (5:2). We do not sit as accused, but now stand in the grace of God. This standing before God is all God's doing. Human beings could do nothing about their sin and its accompanying judgment. He personally intervened in our situation and provided the only solution to our need.

Our relationship with God can be restored through Christ. However, we still live in a broken world. He has not exempted us from the tragedies and suffering that afflict all human beings (5:3–5). Even though we have peace with God, we must still navigate the choppy waters of a sinful, fallen world. Suffering will still accompany us on the journey. However, God can use that suffering as a way for us to experience and express his love and grace. We can bear up in our circumstances and benefit from them. God can produce qualities like perseverance through our hardships. Believers can live as examples of his grace and love in the face of life's challenges.

Paul reminded his readers that this salvation is real and historically verifiable. Jesus Christ was sent by God to accomplish the salvation of humanity (5:6–8). God responded to the sinfulness of humanity (Gen. 3)

by providing a way of true salvation. At just the precise time (Rom. 5:6), God sent his Son into the world to accomplish the miracle of salvation (Galatians 4:4). Salvation flows from the heart of the Creator (Rom. 5:8). Because of his personal love for his creatures, God has offered them the opportunity to be reconciled to him and saved from the penalty and power of sin (5:9–11).

### Implications and Actions

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God created human beings to live in relationship with him. He designed us as relational creatures. However, sin separated humanity from God and damaged this relationship. God responded to this brokenness through a personal and sacrificial expression of love. At just the right time, God sent his Son to redeem humanity from its condition and to reconcile humans back to him. As a result, we can bear his image in a broken world as he uses us as instruments of restoration and healing. God wants to use believers as his image-bearers to communicate the message of reconciliation and hope to our world. We have the unique opportunity to fulfill his original desires for us.

### QUESTIONS

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1. How would you explain to someone what it means to be made in the image of God?



5. How can Christians bear God's image as they interact with a broken world?

## NOTES

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 and 8–13 are from the New International Version (1984 edition).