

# connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

# *Power & Purpose*

God Unveils the  
*Universe*

A STUDY OF  
Genesis 1–11

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*Power & Purpose: God Unveils the Universe (A Study of Genesis 1–11)—  
Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide*

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# How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect with Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

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 use one or more of the following methods:

- 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 in their *Study Guides* 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) under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents, and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.

5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)
6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class, and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

**Premium Commentary. Plan to get the additional Bible study comments available online.** Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or e-mail [baptistway@texasbaptists.org](mailto:baptistway@texasbaptists.org) to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website. The price of these comments is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* 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.

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***FREE!*** Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org). Watch for them in the “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) and click on “Teaching Resource Items” under the “Teacher Helps” tab for this study. These items are selected from the “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

# Writers of This *Teaching Guide*

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# Power & Purpose: God Unveils the Universe A Study of Genesis 1–11

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# lesson **1**

## Creation by God's Word: Forming

### MAIN IDEA

God revealed his power as he created the universe and formed the earth.

### QUESTION TO EXPLORE

What does the Creation account reveal about God's power?

### TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to contemplate the power of God's spoken word



## Bible Comments

### Understanding the Context

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The first book in the Christian Bible is appropriately titled Genesis (*origins, beginnings*); the Hebrew Bible uses the word *bereshith*, which means “in beginning.” The first eleven chapters of Genesis span the beginning of the Creation event to the introduction of Abraham. Chapters 12 through 50 describe God’s interaction with Abraham and his descendants.

Story and genealogies are the primary literary forms used in Genesis. Genealogies (family trees) reveal all people are related and link time periods. Ten genealogies tie the Book of Genesis together (Gen. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2).

Genesis does not name its author or describe the setting in which it was written. Many Old Testament scholars think Moses wrote the book, while others surmise that Moses, under inspiration, may have edited material (both oral and written) that had been compiled over time.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis address key subjects in universal ways: God, humanity, the world, sin, and judgment. God, the central character, reveals himself by word and action. The primary human characters (ancestors of all people) include Adam (human being—“every man”), Eve (“living”), meaning *mother as one who births new life*, and Noah.

In the beginning, God created a good world (Gen. 1–2). God prescribed boundaries for humans, but they used their God-given freedom to attempt to become gods and crossed those boundaries (Gen. 3–11). This crossing disrupted God’s creation and brought chaos, disorder, ugliness, and perversion to the created world. Core examples of boundary crossing include eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3); the sons of God marrying the daughters of men (Gen. 6:1–4); and people attempting to “climb into heaven” via the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). God, true to his divine character, responded in judgment tempered with mercy: Humans were cast out of the garden but not killed; the flood covered the earth, but God spared Noah’s family and the animals; God scattered the people and confused the languages. These universalities set the stage for God’s work of redemption.<sup>1</sup>

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## Interpreting the Scriptures

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### Introduction to Creation (1:1–2)

**1:1–2.** Translating the first verse of Genesis from Hebrew into English can be challenging, as can understanding the relationship between verses one and two. For example, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translates Genesis 1:1–2a this way: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep.” So, Genesis 1:1 is an introductory clause to verse 2.

The New International Version (NIV), along with most modern English versions, translates Genesis 1:1 as an independent sentence: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” The NIV translation appears more accurate because it reads Genesis 1:1 as an introductory conclusion (a sentence which both introduces and concludes a story or poem). We see this same style used in Psalm 32, where verses one and two serve as an introductory conclusion to the story of David’s conviction, repentance, and forgiveness.

A close look at the key wording in verses one and two yields more clarity. The phrase “In the beginning” initiates activity. Writers often coupled the Hebrew word for “beginning” with the Hebrew word for “end” or “conclusion.” In Isaiah 46:10 God is described, in contrast to idols, as one who “makes known the end from the beginning.” (Note: No attempt is made in the biblical text to assign a historical date to the Creation event.)

God is the subject of the first sentence in the Bible. *Elohim*, the Hebrew term for God and one of two primary names used for him in the Old Testament, emphasizes God in his highness, transcendence, and holiness. Worship texts, such as the Book of Psalms, most often use the name *Elohim*. In Genesis 1:1–2:3, it is repeated thirty times. From the first words of Genesis, we know the Bible is a book about God; he is the central character of Genesis 1 through Revelation 22.

Genesis 1:1 proclaims, “In the beginning God created.” The verse does not attempt to prove God exists, nor does it offer any explanation for the origin of God. God “was, is, and is to come.” God is eternal (Rev. 4:9).

The Hebrew verb *bara'*, translated “created,” is an activity only God performs in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, when God created, there is never

a description of him using existing materials. This exclusion leads us to describe his work as “creation out of nothing.” Genesis 1:1 does not try to prove God created the world; it proclaims it as a revelation to be received and embraced.

The use of the descriptive “the heavens and the earth” is a poetic way of saying *everything*. The heavens and the earth describe the totality of the universe.

## Forming the Formless (1:2)

**1:2.** The author of Genesis described the earth as a dark, watery chaos. The wording translated “formless and empty” (NIV), or a “formless void” (NRSV), is picturesque in the Hebrew text. This language provides the literary clue for what follows in Genesis 1:3–31. In Days 1 to 3, God formed the formless, thereby making it habitable. In Days 4 to 6, God filled the empty, providing inhabitants for the habitable spaces that had been formed.

The statement, “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” has been interpreted in different ways. The word “Spirit” also means *wind*, so some understand this as *the wind of God*. Frequently, interpreters point out that the Spirit of God in the Old Testament represents the power of God present and working in the situation. (See how the Book of Judges illustrates this idea.) God’s working is always through his present and powerful Spirit. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit of God acts in a clearer, more direct way.

Each day of Creation followed a pattern:

- It began with the announcement: “And God said.”
- Next came the command: “Let there be,” followed by the completion of the command: “And it was so.”
- Then God evaluated his work: “God saw that it was good,” and the concluding formula: “and there was evening and there was morning” on each day.

## Day 1—Forming Light (1:3–5)

**1:3.** “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” God began the forming and filling of the heavens and the earth by speaking into existence

that which did not previously exist. In six stunning days of Creation, God spoke eight times (twice on Days 3 and 6). The transcendent, powerful God said, "Let there be," and immediately "there was." Words spoken by people are powerful; they can build up or tear down. (See Proverbs 18:21). However, only God's spoken word has the power to create reality out of a formless void.

**1:4.** "God saw that the light was good." God evaluated his creation as "good." The Hebrew word translated "good" seven times in Genesis 1 means *orderly, purposeful, and beautiful*.

Separating the various pieces of creation was a significant part of God providing form and structure (light and darkness in 1:4, sky and sea in 1:6, sea and dry ground in 1:9, day and night in 1:14).

## Day 2—Forming Sky and Seas (1:6–8)

God created time on Day 1, followed by habitable space on Days 2 and 3. By his powerful word, God created the sky to separate the waters above from the waters on the earth. The Hebrew word translated *expanse* in the NIV is translated *dome* in the NRSV. The word "dome" uses an artist's eye to describe the sky, that is, as it appears to observers. The sky looms high above the observer, but also sits on the horizon. Describing nature this way communicates across time and cultures. Even in a scientific world, we still use this visual language when we talk about sunrise and sunset.

## Day 3—Forming the Fertile Earth (1:9–13)

On Day 3, God gathered the waters as "seas," and separated the "dry ground" as land or earth. Then, God made the earth fertile, producing vegetation and fruit-bearing trees. As Genesis 1:29–30 reveals, this aspect of God's creation became bountiful organic food for people and animals.

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### Focusing on the Meaning

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Creation did not emerge out of a cosmic conflict. God created the world by his powerful word. His word is a personal expression of his will (John 1:1–3;

Rev. 4:11). In Genesis 1, God spoke as King on the throne above the universe. During Old Testament times, many kings spoke as if they had divine authority, but Genesis reminds us there is only one true Creator-God.

The Creator-God is transcendent: high, holy and enthroned above the universe. In our twenty-first century context, there is a significant need for us to recall the transcendence of the God we worship.

Consider three significant theological emphases found in Genesis 1:

- The world created by God is **good**, not evil, as some religions and philosophies have insisted.
- The world is good, but it is not God. The created world is not worthy of worship; only the Creator-God deserves praise, honor, and glory (Romans 1:18–25; Rev. 4:11).
- God created the world, and it belongs to him. We are to be thankful stewards of all life forms in God’s world.

Humans often ask, “Where did we come from? Why are we here? Is there any meaning to life?” Genesis proclaims that God’s creative work is the beginning of the world. Contemporary scientific approaches address such questions of origin by observing the world and the life within it. The attempt is made to understand what is and explain how it came to be. Sometimes there are attempts to harmonize scientific explanation and biblical proclamation. However, during such conversations, we should remember the significant differences between the two approaches:

1. They begin with different presuppositions: God vs. only what is observable
2. They start at different places: God vs. the material world
3. They recognize and utilize different methods: Divine revelations vs. human observation, analysis, and theories
4. They expect different outcomes: Worship of the Creator-God vs. relying on human understanding and mastery of the world

Conversations about the origin of the universe and the purpose and meaning of life provide significant opportunities for Christ-followers to share a gospel witness with others.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. Before class, set up stations throughout the room. At each station, provide one of the following: Legos, wooden blocks, Playdough or modeling clay, deck of playing cards, box of dominos, white paper and crayons or markers, or colored construction paper with scissors and tape. Encourage class members to join others at a station of their choosing. Allow five to ten minutes for the groups at each station to create something out of the supplies that have been provided. Then, discuss the following:
  - a. What did you create?
  - b. Why did you choose to create this particular thing?
  - c. What supplies did you use to form your creation?
  - d. Why did you use those particular supplies to form your creation?
2. Ask the class to contrast the difference in their creations with how God created the heavens and the earth. Summarize the explanation from the “Introduction” section of the *Study Guide* regarding *creatio ex nihilo*. Ask, *Why is this significant to our understanding of God.*
3. While participants remain at the stations, give groups about five minutes to share prayer requests with one another. Encourage groups to write down the prayer requests shared and to continue praying for them throughout the week.
4. Bring the class together and remind everyone that the God who created the universe remains on his throne, powerfully at work in the prayer requests they have shared. Lead the class in an opening prayer. Thank God for his power and creative work that continues in each of us.

## Guide Bible Study

5. Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 1:1–2. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this section. Read aloud this statement from the *Study Guide*: *We can take comfort knowing the same God at work in the Creation account continues to move over the aspects of our world today.* Ask the class the following discussion questions:
  - How is God’s perspective different from ours?
  - How are you comforted in knowing he is sovereign over (ruling over) the entire universe?
  - How does this encourage you regarding the prayer requests shared a few minutes ago?
6. Ask the class to discuss the following questions from the *Study Guide*:
  - Consider an aspect of God’s creation that signifies his power. How do you see the hand of God in creation?
  - Genesis 1:2 describes the condition prior to the Creation as formless, empty, and full of darkness. Consider a time when you may have felt like this. How did God intervene in your life to create change?
7. Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 1:3–5. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this passage. Ask the class to consider the following discussion question from the *Study Guide*:
  - The focus of the first day of Creation was the formation of light. From the beginning to the end of the Bible, light symbolizes the character of God and all that is righteous and holy. How can you be light in the dark world this week (Matthew 5:14–16)?
8. Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 1:6–8. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this passage. Ask the class to consider the following discussion question from the *Study Guide*:
  - On the second day, God separated the waters to make a place for land to form. How do boundaries help us to keep everything in the proper place in our lives?

9. Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 1:9–13. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this passage. Ask the class to discuss the following question from the *Study Guide*:
- On the third day, God created the vegetation. Consider how plants grow and multiply. How is this symbolic of what God wants to happen in our lives as we become more like him?

## Encourage Application

10. End the class by discussing the *Study Guide* sidebar “Definition of a Polemic.” Explain how the Genesis account served as a polemic against the falsehoods of others and was a way to point people to God. Encourage class members to leave class with the intent to live this polemic in the world around them. Considering the prayer requests shared earlier in the class and the challenges class members face this week, remind them they may be the best representation to others of who God is. Say, *God yearns for us to point others to him, our powerful Creator.*

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. Bring to class something you or a relative took a long time to create (i.e., crocheted afghan, model airplane, hand-made notecard, handcrafted furniture, etc.). Ask the class to consider the steps involved in making the item. Share about the source of the supplies, how complicated the item was to make, the sacrifices the creator took to make it, and how much the object means to you. Then discuss the following questions:
- How is the creation of this object similar to God creating the heavens and the earth?
  - How is the creation of this object different from God creating the heavens and the earth?
  - How special do you think God's creation is to him? Why?

2. Summarize the *Study Guide* sidebars “Definition of a Polemic” and “The Babylonian Creation Account.” If you have time during the week to research additional Creation accounts, summarize those as well. Ask the class to consider the significance of the Genesis Creation account in light of other false stories circulating in the ancient world. Then, ask the class to share some falsehoods permeating our modern society. Write these on the left side of a markerboard, chalkboard, or posterboard.

## Guide Bible Study

3. Enlist a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1–2 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this passage. Emphasize how darkness existed prior to Creation. Talk about the darkness of the falsehoods listed on the board. Say, *The Holy Spirit was at work in the darkness. Similarly, God’s Spirit is moving about in the world today. Darkness remains, but God invades the darkness.*
4. Enlist a volunteer to read Genesis 1:3–5 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this passage. Go back to the list you made on the markerboard. Ask the class, *How can we bring the light of God into the falsehoods listed?* For example, if a falsehood includes the belief that a person who commits a heinous crime cannot be forgiven, explain how God has forgiven us and how our sins are just as heinous before a holy God. Write the class responses to each falsehood to the right of the falsehood on the markerboard.
5. Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 1:6–8. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this passage. Discuss with the class how essential water is to our world and to us as human beings. Talk about God’s intentionality in how he created the universe, cultivating an environment before creating birds, fish, mammals, and humanity. Say, *God is purposeful in all he does.*
6. Enlist a volunteer to read Genesis 1:9–13 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” section of this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief overview of this passage. Return to the list of falsehoods on the board. Ask, *How may God shape each of us as we strive to bring his light into the falsehoods of our society?* Go through the list of falsehoods on the board. To the far right

of each falsehood, record the answers given by class members as to how we can grow and bear fruit as we strive to bring God's light into each situation.

## Encourage Application

7. Summarize the Study Guide sidebar "The Meaning of Day in Genesis 1." Explain how there are different views on the best way to interpret this terminology. Say, *We do not know for sure the timeline of God's creative work. Similarly, we do not know for sure the timeline of our days on earth. Thus, we should live every day with intentionality and purpose.*
8. Return to the markerboard and ask class members to consider specific action steps they can take to be light in the darkness of the world this week. Ask for responses and then say, *Consider specific ways we can strive to grow and bear spiritual fruit in the world God created. Doing so will point others to the powerful Creator of the universe.* Close in prayer.

## Notes

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1. All Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 are from either the New International Version (1984 edition) or the New Revised Standard Version, as indicated.