

## Focus Verse

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands." – Psalm 19:1

- God's World Declares His Glory
- God's Word Declares His Glory
- God's People and Plan Declare His Glory

## Engage

Life in this world raises challenging questions. Any thinking person, even children, recognize deep questions that are not satisfied by simple answers: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? How should I interpret history and life events? What about the mysteries of relationships and the created world? People in every age have voiced these same questions and looked in many directions for answers. Ultimately, **the only satisfying and true answers about this world and our lives come from our Creator Himself.**

**Genesis reveals truths about God, this world, our lives, our origin and our destiny.** Study this book not just for information, but to meet God. Bring your hard questions to Him. Approach each lesson remembering that your Creator God knows you intimately. He will speak to your own deep questions. He will provide a stabilizing foundation for life in this world and hope for the future.

## God's World Declares His Glory

The concept of the glory of God radiates throughout Scripture. **God's glory encompasses the fullness of all He is.** God is intrinsically holy, infinitely wise and completely perfect. The all-knowing, all-powerful, always good God created the world and everything in it, including you and me. His creation spotlights the infinite worth of His glory. God's full and indescribable beauty bears worth and weight we should ponder.

The weightiness or even the concept of God as a Person does not resonate with many people today. An Almighty God who created and controls all things conflicts with personal autonomy. A personal God, who knows my deepest secrets and loves me anyway, seems far-fetched and threatening. In a fast-paced world that desires instant solutions yet faces lingering questions, people feel abandoned to their own time and space to find meaning. We face a timely opportunity to intentionally focus on the width, breadth and depth of the glory of God. God cannot be restricted by shallow human concepts or dismissed as irrelevant. This God, whose glory cannot be fully told, is the God of Genesis. **God is calling you to grow in your own grasp of all He is.**

## God's General Revelation

As a work of art reveals attributes of the artist, creation reveals attributes of the Creator. God's immense, intricate creation broadcasts His glory. Genesis 1 opens with a burst of symphonic grandeur – God's work in creation. **The created world offers indisputable evidence that God exists and can be known.** Paul speaks of God's general revelation in the first chapter of Romans, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."<sup>1</sup>

God gives us qualities of curiosity, reason and emotion. Every generation explores the workings of the universe. We draw conclusions from facts and theories. We delight in discoveries of the greatness and beauty of this world. As we investigate the fabric and extent of our existence, Genesis 1 profoundly speaks to what we learn. The Bible is not in conflict with scientific facts. However, **God intends all people to accept His revelation of Himself and His creative work by faith.**

In our modern society, people often assume scientific and technological advancement will bring mankind clarity and perhaps even control of the physical world. Yet despite the swinging pendulum of discoveries and supposed advancement, the created world contains treasures and conclusions beyond the grasp of human laboratories and intellect. The mystery and majesty of creation displays power humans cannot predict or control – the winds, the waves and the weather. Creation displays beauty humans cannot

replicate – brilliant colors, majestic mountains, vast oceans, quiet streams, colorful sunsets. Creation displays order that is explained only by a masterful architect – days, seasons, DNA, the microscopic world and the untold reaches of the universe. **The created recognize the Creator through creation.** The created world intentionally dwarfs us so we must seek something or someone more powerful than us. Recognizing our Creator rightly leads us to humble ourselves before our great God.

## God's Word Declares His Glory

### God's Special Revelation

Creation gives enough evidence that God holds people responsible for failing to recognize Him. But realities about God that are exposed in creation do not communicate the full story of salvation. God requires and provides special revelation so people can worship Him in Spirit and truth. **God's special revelation is the inspired Word of God.** God's Word reveals truth that cannot be known through nature alone.<sup>2</sup> The pinnacle of God's special revelation is Jesus Christ Himself, the Word made flesh.<sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of His being<sup>4</sup> and the very embodiment of truth.<sup>5</sup>

**God's special revelation begins in Genesis.** In fact, Genesis gives us the beginning of much of life: man and woman. Birth and death. Sin and redemption. Marriage and government. The trajectory of history, humanity and God's vision for the world originates in this book.

Genesis is the first book of the Bible and the first book of the Pentateuch, the Jewish law. The Pentateuch is comprised of five books – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – all written by Moses.<sup>6</sup> Moses' original audience was the Hebrew people who were redeemed by God from slavery in Egypt. One of Moses' original purposes for writing was to show this newly redeemed people who they are and to whom they belong.<sup>7</sup> A core truth discovered in Genesis is: **The God who creates is also the God who redeems.** More specifically, Genesis authoritatively reveals truth about:

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- **God's character and creation** – God is Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. Through Genesis, we learn God is good, and everything He creates is good (Genesis 1:31).
- **Humanity's origin and purpose** – God created man and woman in His image. God's image upon every person means every person has intrinsic value, worth, dignity and purpose.
- **Humanity's fall into sin** – While God's creation was originally "good," we all know something changed. All of creation is no longer all good. We witness evil and suffering daily. Humanity's rebellion against God and subsequent fall into sin explains this painful reality (Genesis 3:13-19). All of humanity's problems find their source at the Fall.
- **God's promise and plan of redemption** – As sin entered the world, God's plan to redeem, re-create and restore the world is set into motion. In Genesis 3:15, God first speaks of His promised redemption to come through His offspring. We now know this promise was and is fulfilled in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is God the Son, our ultimate Redeemer.

## The Doctrine of the Bible

The term “doctrine” simply means teaching or instruction. Christian doctrine synthesizes the teaching of the whole Bible on a particular topic. Christian doctrine provides a grid through which to interpret daily life and eternity. **Understanding biblical truths allows believers to live in the fullest, most significant way possible.** Each week we will highlight a specific Christian doctrine that rises from the passage. This week, we focus on the doctrine of the Bible.

More and more people in the world today question the reliability of the Bible. Some see the Bible as divisive, even dangerous and hateful. You have committed your time this year to study the Bible. How do you know it is true? Why should you stake your life on this book? Can you trust what you read to be viable for our modern world and your life? These are legitimate questions. **You need to know why you should trust the Bible and seek the God of the Bible.**

**The Bible has stood the test of time and the voice of its critics.** Fulfilled prophecy, even to very specific details, reveals an accuracy only explained by a God who knows and orchestrates the future. Archeological, scientific and historical discoveries validate what the Bible records. But ultimately, God’s Holy Spirit awakens dead hearts and minds to recognize and believe what is true.

**For those who believe God and yield to His Word, the Holy Spirit speaks an internal witness as we read: “It is true!”** People across countless centuries attest to the faithfulness of God to keep the promises recorded in the Bible. God and His Word are strong enough to handle your questions. Express your doubts honestly, and study His Word with a desire to know the truth.

The Bible contains 66 books, written by more than 40 human authors, across a span of 1,500 years, and yet speaks one, singular message. God Himself is the one true Author of the Bible and tells His grand story from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible contains the very words of God. (See 2 Samuel 22:31; Proverbs 30:5; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21.) **The Bible is trustworthy and true, consistent and dependable.**

The Bible explains who God is and His plan to save people from sin and death through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fully God and fully man, Jesus came to earth as the Lamb of God to be offered by God the Father as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of mankind. God the Holy Spirit transforms believers through God’s living Word, bringing new birth and ongoing growth. The Bible reveals how the world began, God’s unfolding plan for history and His coming triumph yet to unfold. **The Bible grounds real people with true hope.**

God’s Word is important because it tells who God is. **God Himself determines truth and defines reality; therefore, what He has revealed to us in His Word rises to ultimate importance.** Just as only the artist can correctly interpret the painting, when the God who knows everything, created everything and controls everything speaks, we should listen. We do not approach the Bible to merely gain knowledge. We study the Bible to know God, understand ourselves and interpret our world.

Without God’s book to frame our lives, we toss wildly to and fro with every rising trend and popular idea. To draw purpose and perspective on life from words spoken by other similarly flawed humans leaves only confusion. **Without God’s sovereign plan as the backdrop for the daily news, we are left without much hope.**

But our loving God did not leave us in such a state of hopeless confusion. God did not leave us to “figure it out.” The God who created us wrote to us. **God gave us His written Word, and He gave us His Son.** When I know that the God of eternity has spoken powerfully into my world, I have hope. The timeless truth captured in the Bible serves as the anchor for my soul. The realities of God Himself described in the Bible lead me to worship. The Bible’s unfolding story of redemption gives me confidence that God has defeated my greatest enemy and exalted my great Savior.

This week, we begin a study of the first book of the greatest book, the Bible. How will you approach this study this year? May God open your eyes to see the miraculous privilege you have to read, study, discuss and live under the very words of God. God is not distant from you and limited to dusty facts and confusing symbols. God came near in Jesus. And God comes near to us every time we open our Bibles. **God spoke the truths of eternity in human language so we can understand.** What a God! What a gift!

# God's People and Plan Declare His Glory

## God's Plan for All People

Genesis reveals the priority of humanity and the sacredness of life. God created men, women, boys and girls in His image as His image-bearers. **People are the particular objects of God's love, an investment of His glory.** As the crown of God's creation, humans receive unique privileges and responsibilities. We were created to steward God's creation. We can know the God who created us and relate to Him.

God invested three key elements in human life at creation:

**Vocation** – Subdue creation, manage it well and multiply in family and society.

**Cooperation** – We are not all the same, and we are to work together.

**Servanthood** – The idea of serving one another undergirds this creation call.

People reflect God's image and are called to live their lives to honor Him.

## God's Plan for His People

**Genesis not only explains God's design in man's creation but begins the story of His ongoing plan for humanity.** After Adam led mankind into sin, God's plan to redeem the people He created and loved began to unfold. Genesis 3 describes the fall of humanity but also offers the first hint of God's plan to restore the perfection lost in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 1 – 11 describe humanity-shaping events over thousands of years.

Genesis 12 – 50 pivot to tell God's redemptive story, starting with one man and extending to all people and nations.

God called childless Abraham, and Abraham believed God's promise that he would be the father of a great nation through whom God would bless all peoples. Spanning about 300 years, the bulk of Genesis focuses on God's choice of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as covenant-bearers of God's unconditional promises. Abraham's family became the nation of Israel, through whom God delivered the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. **We are the beneficiaries of God's creation, promises and purposes for the nation Israel.** The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans that God honored Abraham by giving him the privilege to become the spiritual father to all who believe in God by grace through faith in Messiah Jesus.

God becomes even more precious to us when we discover His loving purpose for people existed

eternally, even before creation.<sup>8</sup> From the beginning, God established human dignity, work, marriage, family, covenants, nations, corporate worship and civilizations. Genesis conveys the intimacy of God forming Adam from dust and Eve from Adam's rib. We witness God's plan that included real people, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. God's plan for the world culminates in His own Son coming to earth, clothed in human flesh. **God's promise to deliver His people and His world is our only hope.** The Bible unfolds God's eternal plan to redeem sinners and restore our fallen environment. God is the author and implementor of human history and eternity.

The glory of God, the sum of His multiplied and magnificent perfections, permeates the pages of the Bible. Genesis 1 establishes the pattern, power and purpose of God. He said, "Let there be ...", "... and it was so." This has never changed. When God spoke, a permanent principle began that will continue until the whole is finished. **Whatever God plans and commands will someday be so.**

What God began in Genesis, He completes in Revelation. In Genesis, God emerges as man's Creator. In Revelation, grateful worshippers surround His eternal throne forever praising the worth and wonder of Jesus, the Son. God will re-create believers in resurrected and glorious bodies in which we will live with Him forever in His new heaven and new earth. Amazing as it is, the eternal God chooses and uses people like us. **The history and future of humanity and the course of our lives rest firmly in His big and powerful plan.**

**In a world that screams chaos and confusion, God provides an unshakeable foundation for those who believe Him.** The weaving of God's perfect, eternal story with the lives and work of real, imperfect people magnifies the redemptive power of God. How will your life, with its unique joys and struggles, intersect with the book of Genesis? Trust that the infinite God knows you intimately. He is not limited by your limitations. He will answer your questions, build your faith and lead you forward. Will you seek Him? Will you trust Him?

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## Hold Fast

Genesis is the book of beginnings. All that is holy and good began with God. He is the source of existence, the universe, time and all matter. But the creation account recorded in Genesis offers far more than an explanation of the existence of people, animals and the heavens and earth. Just as creation began with God, human flourishing also begins with God. **A grounded, meaningful life begins as you recognize God as your powerful Creator and intimate Father.** He is the beginning and source of a fruitful life, personality and purpose. This means we must make Him the center of our plans, personalities, friendships, family, schedules, careers, imaginations and desires through faith.

God's best path for your life begins as you trust Him to begin new works in your life and relationships, for His glory.

The Old Testament looks forward as if through *shadows* toward the bright light of the coming Christ. The New Testament includes both fulfillment and anticipation. Salvation has come through Jesus' death on the cross. He paid sin's penalty and credits His righteousness to all who believe in Him. Jesus Christ will come again to destroy His enemies. He will welcome believers into everlasting victory and fulfillment. They will glorify God and enjoy Him, His people and His creation forever. **God's story invites all people to repent and believe in Jesus.**

## Apply It

How often do you stop to consider why God made the world? Do you think about His delight in creating the beautiful variety of hues and vistas expressed in nature? Do you wonder why He made the anteater, the giraffe, the gazelle or the centipede? Does rain prompt you to think of God's care for the world and promise to renovate it someday? Do you sense His power in thunder and crashing waves? Does the order within ecosystems and photosynthesis amaze you? Creation reflects the Creator. God made the world to express His glory. **The realities expressed in creation provide context for your daily life.** Deliberately gaze at God's creation this week. How will you derive strength and joy from the tangible evidence of His goodness, majesty and nearness? May the weight of His glory generate fresh amazement and a stabilizing foundation for your life.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches that the ultimate purpose for people is "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." How do we glorify God? The beginning of a life that glorifies God is to know God as Father and Christ as Savior, through faith. Glorifying God is more than knowing facts or giving God credit. **We glorify God when we orient our lives to know God and reflect His fullness.** In Matthew 5:16, Jesus said, "... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Believers do not make God's light shine; they let His light shine. Our intimacy with God and His Spirit's work within us yields actions that please and give Him glory. Does your life shine for the glory of God? Will you examine your thoughts, words and deeds this week to make much of His great name? You will experience God

and enjoy Him forever as you live out the light and life He infuses in you.

At BSF, you approach God's Word and this study not alone, but as part of a group committed to journey with you. Individually and together, you will pray, study, reflect, discuss, practice and grow. Think deeply about God's Word. Seek to know His character. Ask questions. Wrestle with doubts, in faith that He will strengthen you with wisdom. Be courageous in trusting His promises despite what appears impossible. God transforms His people through faith. **God puts us in community to challenge and support one another.** Your story will help others. Their stories will help you. Together, you will grow to know God better and learn how good it is to live by faith in His Word.

## Go Deeper

Check out these footnoted references for further study of God's Word in this week's lesson.

1: **God clearly seen:** Romans 1:20

2: **God's inspired Word:** 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21

3: **Word made flesh:** John 1:14

4: **Radiance of God's glory:** Hebrews 1:3

5: **Embodiment of truth:** John 14:6

6: **Moses' authorship:** Luke 24:44

7: **Belong to God:** Exodus 3:13-15

8: **God's chosen:** Ephesians 1:4-5

# Helps for our Study of the Bible at BSF

The goal of Bible study is to spend time with God and in community to know Him better and to make Him more fully known. The fourfold method of BSF – daily personal study, group discussion, lecture, study notes – follows two main principles of proper Bible study:

- Context is key.
- Scripture interprets Scripture.

What God's word says it means matters more than what we think or feel it means. As we apply God's truth through faith, we experience abundant life.

- Each time you read your Bible, prayerfully **surrender** yourself to God and His truth by faith.
- **Decide** that your goal for time spent with your BSF lesson is to **relate** with God and **allow** Him to accomplish His plan.
- **Focus** on God's presence with you as you study. **Practice** His truths, and grow. **Ask** others to pray for you and with you that you will **draw nearer** to Him and **be changed**. He is faithful.

**Read** the week's passage: "know the neighborhood." A key to proper Bible study is to know the context of the verses you read.

- What comes before and after the passage?
- Who is the original audience to whom this Scripture was written, and why?

Try to read or listen to the whole week's passage once or twice. Try different Bible translations. Your BSF teaching and notes help provide the context for each week's passages with resources for learning more.

**Review** the day's verses: Ask, "What are today's verses about? What is going on here?"

- Identify or write down the facts – who, what, where, when, why, how. Some of your BSF questions ask this.
- Read Bible footnotes and cross-references to help you understand how this passage fits into the whole Bible.
- Look for the sentence at the top of each day's BSF questions. It summarizes the day's verses.

**Reflect** on the day's verses: Ask, "What have I learned? What do today's verses mean?"

Each day's BSF questions are developed to discover truths and meaning in God's Word. Scan the questions listed for each day before you read the verses. You will find truth by exploring any passage with these foundational questions in mind:

- Is there a command, universal truth or promise from God?
- Is there a warning to heed or an example to follow or avoid?
- Is there evidence of God's character (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit)?
- Is there a prayer I can make my own or pray for others or our world?
- Is there a pattern of disobedience or virtue shown by the characters?
- Is there personal application instead of thinking of others?
- Is there truth here I have not yet lived by?
- Is there a doubt, fear or unconfessed sin I had not realized?
- Is there an encouragement for me to keep on persevering or waiting?

**Respond** to the day's verses: Ask, "How can I apply what I've learned? What needs to change because this is true?"

- Your answers to your BSF questions focus on what you have learned that is especially meaningful to you right where you are. Write out specific answers with expectation that you will learn even more in your group, in weekly teaching and from other BSF resources and continued study.
- Prayerfully regard your answers as communication with and commitment to God. Never be afraid to have other questions. Be encouraged when you struggle with a passage or your answer. Growing takes time.
- Begin to live out your answer and be accountable. BSF group fellowship times are excellent opportunities to reflect on how God is growing you through the truths you are learning.

No one ever completes Bible study or runs out of questions for God. Bible study is a lifetime passion to more fully know the God who is and to learn how He loves you, all people and the world. As we grow to know Him, we grow to love, trust, obey, honor and enjoy Him forever. God gave the Bible for fellowship in a community of grace, growth and praise. As you apply God's Word by faith, you will reveal the person God created you to become. You will see and love the world and people around you in His way. You will magnify God and mature in your loving commitment to Him and your compassion for people.