UNIT 1 - BEGINNINGS OF PLANET EARTH

Lesson 1

 HOW IT ALL BEGAN

OVERVIEW

Scripture
Genesis 1

Bible Truth
God created the universe and all life, and He rules over all that He made.

Life Response Aim
To develop a new appreciation for the wonders of Creation and the awesome creative power of God.

Memory Verse
“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Hebrews 11:3, KJV

“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” Hebrews 11:3, NIV

FOCUS
Illogical Theories

DISCOVER
Explore the Biblical Account of Creation

RESPOND
God Deserves Our Praise for What He Has Done

MATERIALS

❑ Bibles, paper, pencils

FOCUS
❑ Teaching Resources, Sheet 1
❑ Watch
❑ Chalkboard, chalk
❑ Book

DISCOVER
❑ Young Teen Scene, Student Sheet 1
❑ Teaching Resources, Sheet 2

RESPOND
❑ Young Teen Scene, ON TARGET 1
❑ Real Time take-home papers

Preparing Your Heart to Teach

Ever hear someone declare, “I see God in nature”? A well-meaning believer might intend to convey how he or she can see God’s handiwork in every element of His creation. Nevertheless, too many others want to reduce God to an impersonal force—as if He were a personification of nature. A constant theme throughout Genesis 1 is, “God said . . . And it was so.” God is the supremely personal being—the One who speaks (not merely forms) a thing into existence. Nature doesn’t speak, nor can it think and design.

Isn’t it amazing that this same personal Creator of everything also dwells in the believer’s heart? As you prepare to communicate His awesomeness to your students, grasp a sense of that awe for yourself—the Creator of all the universe is in you, and He (not it) is empowering you as you teach this Sunday!
Use Sheet 1, Teaching Resources, as a reminder to your students of the Old Testament books. Leave the poster displayed during this quarter.

With some sense of drama, slowly take off your wristwatch and say: I have a theory. See this watch? I bought it several years ago (you fill in the appropriate time). It keeps perfect time. The hands are the perfect size for the dial. The numbers are perfectly spaced. It says “Casio” (again, whatever applies in your case) on its face. My theory goes like this: Thousands of years ago an explosion in a junkyard sent millions of metal fragments into the sky. In the midst of all that confusion, the pieces of this watch just sort of fell together by chance. And here it is on my wrist this morning.

Allow your students to dispute your claim by pointing out that someone obviously made the watch. How do you know that someone made it? Did you see someone make it? Has anyone claimed he or she made it? Is anyone’s name on it, verifying that someone made it? What specifically convinced you that this watch was created?

List their responses on the board. They might offer such answers as “It works. There is order to it. It has a design to it.”

If time permits, note the history of the “design theory”: it was presented nearly 200 years ago by an English minister named William Paley, and it argues the necessity for a Designer of the universe, based upon the analogy between the order found in manufactured machines and also in living things. Later, Charles Darwin attacked the design argument, insisting that “natural selection” could create the same kind of order.

Next pull out a book (preferably other than the Bible) and pass it around the room. Ask students to glance through its pages as you ask them to consider your next theory. I have another theory. See this book? I bought it several years ago (again, you fill in the appropriate time). It’s a good book, and I’ve found it to be very instructional. The words in the sentences make sense in English, and the sentences all fit together to make paragraphs. I’ve been able to read and interpret what this book has to say and apply it to life (again, whatever is relevant in your case).

My theory goes like this: Thousands of years ago an explosion in a library sent millions of paper fragments into the sky. In the midst of all that confusion, the pieces of this book just sort of fell together by chance. And here it is in your hands this morning. You can see it for yourself.

Allow your students to dispute your claim by pointing out that someone obviously wrote and someone obviously published the book. Again, challenge them to prove their responses. How do you know that someone wrote it? Did you see someone do it? Has anyone claimed he or she wrote it? Is anyone’s name on it, verifying that someone wrote it?

What specifically convinced you that this book was written? Add to your list on the board (from the watch discussion) any responses that might be new. They might offer such answers as “Someone put the thoughts together and communicated them. Ideas and concepts come from a mind.”

Explain that even if the Darwinian response to Design was adequate, more recent scientific discoveries prove Paley’s arguments all the more. Every living thing has what is called “DNA,” which contains codes—language—that determine what kind of creature it will be and what kind of features it will have.

The color that your eyes would be, the color of your hair, your blood type—it all has been encoded into your cells.

Here’s a similar example—what if someone told you the computer software that makes a computer work was all the result of random accidents—no one created the programming?

TRANSITION ➔ Obviously, anyone with any level of intelligence would know that the existence of a watch, a book, or a computer program demands the existence of a watchmaker, an author, and a computer programmer. Yet, there are many people who have chosen to believe that something as awesome and incredibly complex as our universe has no creator. They insist it is nothing more than the product of chance! Have you been taught that? Let’s see what the Bible says.
What We Remember

Give each student a pencil and Student Sheet 1.

QUESTION 1

This morning we’re going to have a race against the clock. In two minutes, come up with as many answers as you can to Question 1 on the back of your student sheet and write them in the space provided. Though you can’t use your Bible, you may refer to the illustration on the front of the sheet to jog your memory.

After two minutes, have students give their answers, writing their responses on the chalkboard. Affirm them for what they wrote. Have them next complete the answers to Questions 2–4 using Genesis 1 as their guide.

What Genesis 1 Reveals

QUESTION 2

What did God create? (The heavens and the earth—light, the sky, land, water, plants, animals, fish, birds, people. In short, the universe and life in it.) Did the use of Genesis 1 add anything to their answer to Question 1?

QUESTION 3

Genesis 1 emphasizes God’s actions. What did God do when He created? (He spoke—commanded things into existence, saw that the Creation was good, divided and arranged various parts of the Creation, and named each part. In fact, God did everything in the creative process.)

QUESTION 4

In what ways does Genesis 1 differ from your science textbooks? (Genesis 1 says that God created the universe and life; textbooks often don’t mention His role at all.)

Read Genesis 1:1, then introduce the next section by saying, Genesis 1 was not written to tell us, in scientific terms, how God created the universe. The Bible simply states the fact that He did create “the heavens and the earth.” Unfortunately, many people choose to believe that God did not create the universe at all. Is there a contradiction between scientific theories and the Bible at this point? Let’s take a closer look at Genesis 1 and see.
Obviously, since no human was around billions of years ago to witness this, and since this theory cannot be reproduced under laboratory conditions, the theory of evolution can in no way be considered scientific fact. Can anyone explain why people would rather believe evolution than the Bible? Give the students a moment to think this one through. The primary point of the answer is this: Since God did indeed create everything as the Bible says, then we humans are responsible to worship and obey Him. Many people would rather reject a belief in God than obey and serve Him.

According to Genesis 1:20, 24, 26 how did life begin? (God commanded life into existence.)

According to Genesis 1:31, how much time did God use to create everything? (Six days. God certainly could have taken six billion years, or six minutes for that matter. But the Bible indicates He chose to create life in six days, resting on the seventh, thus giving us a basic measurement of time—one week.)

According to Genesis 1:27 how old is the universe anyway? While an evolutionist talks in terms of billions of years, the Bible speaks in reference to thousands. This is certainly not alarming since God obviously created a mature universe. Adam was a man, not an infant. Trees were fully grown and plant life produced fruit. Starlight from distant suns millions of light-years away was immediately visible from earth (Gen. 1:16-17). Thus, the universe is far younger than it appears.

According to Genesis 1:11-12, 21-25, 27 where did the different kinds of animals come from? (God created them just as they are. Human beings did not come from animals, nor did animals come from plants, nor did plants come from single-celled life forms. Each kind came from the hand of God, the Creator. And each reproduces “after its kind.” One kind does not develop into a separate, distinct kind.)

The Importance of What the Bible Teaches

Why is it so important to believe what the Bible says anyway?

Divide your class into three small groups. Give each a card cut from Sheet 2, Teaching Resources and instructions to answer the questions on it.

GOD CREATED AN ORDERLY, NOT A RANDOMLY CHAOTIC, UNIVERSE (GEN. 1)

Group 1  What did God create on each day of the week? Record the group’s findings.

What pattern do you see in God’s acts of Creation? On Day 1 He created light, and on Day 4 the sun and moon began to shine (1:3-5, 14-19). He created the sea and sky on Day 2, and on Day 5 sea creatures and birds came to inhabit them (1:6-8, 20-23). Finally, Day 3 saw the appearance of dry land, with the land animals and people appearing on the land on Day 6 (1:9-13, 24-27).

First God created the frame; then He filled it. Note also the pattern in Days 1–3 and 4–6. When God first created the earth it was formless and void (or empty). On days 1–3 He formed it, and on days 4–6 He filled it.

What do these patterns tell us about how God created? He created the earth and all life purposely; He didn’t just provide the raw materials and walk away. He carefully oversaw each part of the creation process.

What do these patterns tell us about the Creation itself? (It is orderly, not random.)

Can you think of reasons an orderly universe is so important? (Laws of nature such as gravity, chemicals that can be studied and used, etc.)

GOD CREATED A PERSONAL, NOT IMPERSONAL, UNIVERSE (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28-29)

Group 2  What phrase is used to describe how God created? (“God said.”)

How many times is the phrase “God said” used? (Ten times) Thus, it was a Person who created the world, not matter plus energy, plus chance, plus time. In fact, according to Colossians 1:16, Jesus Himself did the creating!

GOD CREATED A VERY GOOD UNIVERSE (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)

Group 3  What words did God use to describe what He created, and how many times did He say it? (Good, and very good, six times)

The next time you step outside and look up, down, or around you, you will see ample evidence of the awesome power of God who spoke the universe into existence. He is certainly worthy, therefore, of our worship and praise.

The words of Hebrews 11:3 are good ones to memorize. God did indeed create the universe by His command!

In light of what we have learned in Genesis 1, how should we now respond to God and to the universe, which He has made?
**Just Think about It!**

Prepare in advance for this portion of the class by doing some quick, easy research. Find an article in a magazine (such as *National Geographic*), textbook, or encyclopedia that communicates interesting information about one piece of God’s creation. (For instance, consider phenomena among certain animals, in geology, in the weather, in astronomy, or in the human body.) Try to find one example that would be unknown and intriguing to your students. Select appropriate portions of the article to read to the class, and then emphasize the amazing design that God invested in just that example.

Next, ask your students to think of one scientific fact (according to the definition given in the Discover section, p. 6) that they’ve learned from school, a book, or a television program, and which they found intriguing. Give them a few minutes to consider, and then encourage each to share his or her example of God’s amazing design. With each example, ask the class to suggest what it indicates about its Designer.

After all have shared, challenge your students to respond to the following: **How does it make you feel to know you have a personal relationship with the infinitely intelligent, artistic, powerful, reliable (add any other appropriate adjectives that the students might have suggested), and loving Designer of all this?**

**Praising from A to Z**

Invite the students to bow their heads in prayer as together you pray through certain letters of the alphabet. As you suggest a letter, have the students offer a sentence prayer in which they praise God for one aspect of His character as revealed in His creation, or an aspect of His creation itself that begins with that letter.

For example, they might praise God for being Almighty, Big, Caring, or Directly involved in the world and our lives. They might thank God for giving us a creation that is Awesome, Beautiful, Colorful, or Designed for our enjoyment.

**God designed the universe to reveal His glory and to provide us, His children, with enjoyment** (1 Tim. 6:17).

You might end this lesson by encouraging your students to take some time this week to observe the beauty of a rose or the majesty of the night sky and reflect on the fact that each one of us has the incredible privilege of walking with the God who created it all.

**On Their Own**

Hand out ON TARGET 1, cut from page 31 of *Young Teen Scene*. Have your students write down seven things God created that are important to them (e.g., a pet, a park, a parent, a best friend).

Challenge your students to thank God for at least one of those things this week. Also, encourage them to read “Hooked!” and to use POWER LINK for their regular devotions in this week’s Real Time.

**ENRICHMENT IDEAS**

**Photographs**

A trip to the local library or travel agency can yield several beautiful color photographs of galaxies, nature scenes, and pictures of animal life. Display these around the room to create an atmosphere that can illuminate your classroom discussion.

**Involving Parents**

Invite a parent of one of your teens to come to class and present expert information on a part of creation for which he or she has professional or academic knowledge. (Ensure that the presentation will be consistent with the Bible.) Consider involving parents who are science teachers, doctors, scientists, or anyone who could put together an accessible presentation that demonstrates how awesome God’s creation really is.
"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

(Genesis 1:1)
Without looking in your Bible, list everything God created in the six days of Creation.

Now go to Genesis 1 and note anything that you did not list above.

There is a lot of action in Genesis 1. What are some of the things God did when He created? List all the verbs you can spot.

In what way does Genesis 1 differ from your science textbooks?

Making God’s Word Mine

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Hebrews 11:3
LESSON 1

FALL QUARTER

HOOKED!

By Rod Randall
The dive master zipped up his wet suit, then gave us a final warning. “Beware of the fish hooks you collect. They’re either rusty or attached to a line. Either way, you don’t want to get stuck.”

“Oh, great,” I muttered under my breath. “That’s just what I needed to hear.”

As I waded into the surf, loaded down with scuba gear, all I could think of was rusty hooks, sharp and barbed, piercing my skin. A school of blue sharks would smell my blood and call dibs for the first bite of me.

Participating in an underwater cleanup had been my dad’s idea. “It will be fun to dive beneath the pier,” he told me.

At first that sounded good, but now I was longing for the secluded cove we had initially planned to dive in. It offered crystal clear water and a rich assortment of sea life to photograph. I’d just received a new...
A wide-angle lens and was hoping to use it.

Too bad the water surging around my chest looked as clear as mud.

Breathing deep from my tank, I kicked out beneath the crashing waves. The ocean felt like ice as it seeped into my wet suit.

I scanned the bottom for trash while trying to keep an eye on my dad. I could barely see him.

I hoped the visibility would improve in the deeper water near the end of the pier. Then I remembered the fishermen would be there, too, which meant a maze of baited hooks to dodge or rusty ones to clean up. My attitude went from bad to worse.

I kept swimming past the pier supports covered with black mussel shells. I bagged a candy bar wrapper along with a few pieces of fast-food litter. Flakes of decomposing bait swirled in the murky water. People sure do their best to mess up God’s handiwork, I thought.

Then I saw what I had been dreading. A massive hook attached to a lure rested on the sand. It was a treble hook, which meant three single hooks fastened back to back. The thing was large enough to land a swordfish, but it wasn’t moving.

If the line was attached to a fishing pole, would the lure just be sitting there? It must have snagged on something and broke off. I reached out, slowly. If I left the lure there it would rust, but I didn’t want to get stuck. The thought of becoming a shark snack didn’t sound too appealing. I got closer. Careful. The lure remained still. Holding my breath, I grabbed the line and pulled.

It jerked back! The giant hook slid toward my hand. Someone was yanking the line from above! I flung the lure away as the barbs zipped past my fingers.

I drew deep breaths from my tank. My mask began to fog. I couldn’t see my dad. I kicked

Panic filled my lungs. Something had me from behind. I couldn’t get loose.

Lord, what’s happening?

continued on page 6 for
Monday
Read: Genesis 1:1-8

Think About: How many times does Genesis 1 use the phrase “God said . . .”?

Several years ago, there was a commercial for a well-known financial company. Some man on the street would say, “My broker is 'John Doe,' and he says . . .” And suddenly everyone would stop talking because, according to the commercial, when John Doe spoke, people listened.

The Bible says God spoke the universe into existence. His Word is powerful enough to change your life. Take the time to listen to what He has to say.

Pray: Ask God to change your life through the power of his Word.

Tuesday
Read: Genesis 1:9-19

Think About: The surface temperature of the sun is almost 10,000 degrees!

We know that our earth speeds around the sun in its orbit at over 65,000 miles per hour. This speed is important because, if our rate of revolution around the sun slowed down or speeded up, all of our seasons and our calendar would get messed up. Plus, we would either fry if we were too close to the sun or freeze if we were too far away from it. The universe that God has made is so incredibly precise!

Pray: Thank God for His amazing creation.
**Wednesday**  
**Read:** Genesis 1:20-26  
**Think About:** Carefully reread verse 26. The Bible tells us that God placed humans in charge of the whole world!  
If you have a younger brother or sister, maybe you know what it feels like to be put in charge. It is an awesome privilege, but at the same time a huge responsibility.  
The Bible gives us an important job to do. Jesus said that, as Christians, we are responsible for telling people that God loves them, that His Son died for them, and that He desires to have a personal relationship with them (Matt. 28:19-20).  
**Pray:** Ask God to help you fulfill your responsibility to Him today.

**Thursday**  
**Read:** Genesis 1:27–2:3  
**Think About:** When I was little I hated going to sleep. I had to be forced to take a nap and go to bed at night. Then, when I was a teenager, I wanted to sleep all the time. I took naps when I could and hated getting up in the morning.  
Now that I’m an adult, I don’t have time for naps. I don’t get to go to bed until late some nights, and I have to get up early in the morning! All of us need rest. Genesis 2:2-3 tells us that even God rested as our example. Later, He commanded His people to rest one day a week.  
**Pray:** Ask God to help you to balance work, play, and rest, so that you will stay spiritually and physically healthy.

**Friday**  
**Read:** Genesis 2:4-9  
**Think About:** When I got into trouble my mom used to say to me, “I brought you into this world and I can take you out!” That threat was usually enough to get me to change my behavior, but it was only partially true.  
The Bible tells us that it is God who ultimately gives us life. Read Psalm 139:13-16. Like David, God personally designed and created you in your mother’s womb. You are His artwork, one of His masterpieces. There is no one else exactly like you!  
Do you think of yourself as God’s work of art?  
**Pray:** Thank God for making you the way you are.

**Saturday**  
**Read:** Genesis 2:10-17  
**Think About:** Read verses 16 and 17 again. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from any tree in the garden—except one. There was only one possible way for Adam and Eve to ruin everything—and they went for it.  
You face a lot more opportunities to sin than they did, but it still comes down to the choices you make. Every day you must choose whether to obey God and enjoy His benefits, or to disobey Him and suffer the uncomfortable, even destructive, results. What choice will you make today?  
**Pray:** Ask God to help you choose to obey Him today.
hard with my fins, through the seaweed, past a pillar, searching for him. Then a jerk on my tank stopped me.

Was it Dad? I tried to look but couldn’t turn around. Something had me! I backed up and twisted, but I couldn’t see what was holding me down. It had to be a line snagged on the bottom that wrapped around my tank. I kicked hard for the surface. It didn’t help. Lord, what’s happening? I gasped, fearful I would run out of air. Panic filled my lungs. My skin burned with adrenaline.

Desperately, I searched for my dad. He must have surfaced to wait for me. I pulled my dive knife from its sheath and sliced at the water above my tank. Nothing. I reached back until it felt like my arm would come out of its socket.

Then something bumped my neck. I brought my knife around ready for a fight. It was my dad. He motioned for me to calm down, then reached behind me. Suddenly I was free.

I swam straight for the surface.

He followed.

“Where were you?” I snapped. “I couldn’t get loose.”

“Looking for you,” Dad said. “You were supposed to stay with me.”

“Stay with you? I couldn’t even see you,” I replied curtly.

“You could see me just fine if you’d pay attention. You swam right under a nest of fishing line that was caught on a pillar. You know better than that. What’s wrong?” Dad asked.

“Fish hooks,” I said, explaining what happened with the lure. I removed my mask to defog the lens.

“There’s more than that down there,” Dad said. “Open your eyes, Son.”

“They are open, but all I’m seeing is garbage.”

“Then you need to look again,” Dad said.

Before I could argue, my dad deflated his buoyancy control vest and descended. I reluctantly followed him to the bottom, still stewing.

Eventually, I picked up a candy wrapper and a pair of sunglasses, then noticed an aluminum can. I was about to bag it when I saw a bulge coming from the opening at the top of the can.

I held the can near my mask, curious. A soft brown bubble, freckled with turquoise and
green, oozed from the drink hole. Soon an eye gazed at me. Then another. I watched in awe as legs appeared, covered with tentacles.

I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. A baby octopus, less than a foot long, squeezed out of the can’s small opening! Unbelievable. Its tentacles moved with strength and grace, like a ballet dancer on glass.

With my free hand I grabbed my camera. The octopus fluttered with the current then perched on my dive glove, as if it were my pet. Its mosaic of colors shone like emeralds on dirt, making it strikingly beautiful. I carefully adjusted the lens and snapped the shot.

Then I noticed my dad. He was watching me and smiling. I realized I was smiling too. It was the best picture I had ever taken!

Of all places, in the dingy, murky muck of a pier, the wonder of God’s creation came through. And it even paused to pose for a picture. Amazing!

The swim back was better, so much so that I didn’t want to leave. Two crabs crawled from behind a pillar. Orange and violet starfish clung to the rocks. A school of fish swam with the surge in a rainbow of colors.

The visibility was just as bad, but my perspective was clearer. It came down to what I focused on. Yes, there was litter, but there was also an ocean. And it was beautiful. Hooked on a new wave of appreciation, I opened my eyes and enjoyed the ride.

Rod Randall is co-author of two young adult fiction series, The Misadventures of Willie Plummet and Heebie Jeebies.
Look at God’s creation and you can’t help but be amazed at His perfect design. Every living thing has been created with exactly the right tools to survive in its habitat. Snowshoe hares, for example, change color seasonally to blend in with summer brown and winter white landscapes. Desert animals have hard exoskeletons or leathery skins that help conserve moisture in the hot sand. Plants too are able to adapt to different environments with the help of their God-given tools—leaves!

Leaves do more than provide shade on a sunny day. All leaves work as giant “kitchens,” producing sugar water to feed trees and plants by mixing sun energy, water, and carbon dioxide. Leaves may also support, protect, or even collect fertilizing food for a plant.

Some leaves and stems are modified, or changed, into tendrils, tiny vines that grab nearby objects such as fence posts, or other plants. By hanging onto these objects, tendrils give support to plants as they grow.

Bract can be colorful and are often mistaken for flowers (such as on dogwoods or poinsettias). But actually they are special leaves that protect the true flower where seeds are produced. Cacti are famous for their protection. Few people touch their sharp spikes! Cactus spines are actually another of God’s specially designed leaves.

Additionally, plants need food from the earth. Some plants live in poor soil without enough nitrogen and minerals, so God sends them fertilizers in the form of insects! These carnivorous (meat-eating) plants actually eat insects! Their leaves are designed specifically for trapping and digesting.

Yes, God gave just the right tools to each of His creations. If God cares in such detail for plants, He will surely provide for His children (see Matthew 6:28-30). If we put Him first in our lives, He will care for our needs. What a perfect plan!
Compliment your teaching with these in-depth and easy to use classroom resources designed to make every lesson memorable.

**Teaching Guide**

The Teaching Guide is designed to help you get the most out of your preparation and class time. Included are full lesson plans, age-appropriate tips, teacher devotionals, and more.

*One per teacher recommended.*

**Teaching Resources**

Visually reinforce the lesson content with the resource packet. This complete packet includes discussion activities, Bible-art posters, maps, and more.

*One per class recommended.*

**Young Teen Scene**

This student book combines in-class activities with weekly take-home devotionals. Each lesson will generate participation in the Sunday school lesson while causing students to interact with God’s Word for life application.

*One per student recommended.*

**Real Time**

It has to be now, and it has to be real. Our relationship with God and each other is happening right now. The true-to-life fiction stories, helpful teaching articles, daily devotionals, and Bible readings help students in their walk with God—today.

*One per student recommended.*