

8

BIBLE INTERPRETATION & SCIENCE

What kinds of answers
can we expect from the Bible?

MEET

- Old Testament Scholar
Tremper Longman III

GROW

- Unity

ENGAGE



- Interpreting Scripture
- Cultural Context Then and Now
- Harmonizing Science
and Scripture
- Ancient Cosmology and
Literary Structure of Genesis 1
- Concordism and Divine
Accommodation Case Study

INTEGRATE

- Disagreeing Well

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8

Bible Interpretation and Science

What kinds of answers can we expect from the Bible?



TEACHING TIME

4:30–6:00
HOURS

Unit Overview

Unit 8: Bible Interpretation and Science teaches students the principles and methods Christians use to understand and apply the meaning of Scripture, paying special attention to the Bible's ancient context and the ways Christians harmonize the truth in the Bible with scientific knowledge.

This unit features:

- A video introduction to Old Testament scholar Tremper Longman III.
- A devotional Bible study on the virtue of unity.
- An explanation of the origin of the Bible and principles of Bible interpretation.
- An activity that shows how differences between our modern context and the ancient context of the Bible affect our understanding.
- A comparison of ways people harmonize modern science and the Bible.
- Examples of how people interpret Genesis 1 in light of ancient ideas about the cosmos and the literary structure of the text.
- A case study of different approaches to cosmology in the Bible.
- A chance to practice Christian unity with people who have a different interpretation of Genesis.

QUICK LINKS

[User Introduction and Overview](#)

[Units List](#)

[Course Pairing](#)

[Next Gen Science Standards Alignment](#)

[Glossary](#)

Learning Outcomes

What will students know or be able to do after this unit?

- Explain the importance of unity for the church.
- Describe how paying attention to the Bible's original audience, purpose, literary forms, and cultural context helps a reader understand the Bible better.
- Analyze how differences in language, cultural concepts, experience, and background knowledge affect biblical interpretation.
- Compare and contrast concordist and divine accommodation expectations about how science and the Bible fit together.
- Identify elements of ancient Near East (ANE) cosmology that appear in the Genesis 1 creation account.
- Use a literary approach to analyze the Genesis 1 creation account in terms of realms and inhabitants.
- Evaluate the influence of concordist and divine accommodation approaches on the interpretation of young earth creationist, old earth creationist, and evolutionary creationist authors.

How to Use This Unit

Please see the **User Introduction and Overview** (biologos.link/user-intro) for important information and links, such as the difference between the five module types (Meet, Grow, Experience, Engage, and Integrate); our terms of use (how documents may be modified and distributed); and advice for communicating with parents or others in your community about potentially controversial topics.

This document contains lesson plans for the entire unit. Other files, such as student handouts, images for the Grow module, teacher instructions for specific activities, answer keys, and slide presentations, are accessible via links within this document.

Teacher's Notes and sample answers are formatted with italics.

Scope and Sequence

This unit builds on *Unit 2: Ways of Knowing*. It assumes students are familiar with how scientific knowledge and theological knowledge are similar and different, and how each type of knowledge is acquired. It also assumes students know the difference between core doctrines and secondary beliefs. This unit relies on an approach to interpreting Scripture which values understanding the cultural context and hypothesizing about what the text would have meant to the original audience. You may want to point out to students that other hermeneutical lenses (e.g. theological or devotional) are also necessary; reading Scripture in a variety of ways can help us better understand what God wants to teach us in his word.

After completing *Unit 8: Bible Interpretation and Science*, you can continue with other units (biologos.link/units-list) that pair well with your science or Bible course (biologos.link/course-pairing). The modular design gives you flexibility to pick and choose the activities that best suit your goals, time constraints, and students' interests.

To learn more about how Christians interpret Genesis and reconcile core Christian beliefs with evolution and an ancient earth, see *Unit 9: Evolution and God's Creation*, *Unit 10: The Fossil Record and Faith*, and *Unit 11: Humans and the Rest of Creation*.

For an introduction to questions at the intersection of faith and science, see *Unit 1: Faith and Science Foundations*. To explore how science can be a way to serve God, see *Unit 3: Science as a Christian Vocation*. An emphasis on seeing truth about God in the natural world is found in *Unit 12: Seeing God in Creation*. Open questions and debated issues about how to best reconcile theological and scientific knowledge are explored in *Unit 4: Cells and Design*, *Unit 5: Genetic Diversity and Human Dignity*, *Unit 6: DNA Technologies and Ethics*, *Unit 7: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, *Unit 13: Caring for the People and the Planet*, *Unit 14: Climate Change and Our Commission*, and *Unit 15: Biodiversity and Conservation*.

Pedagogy of Hospitality

Integrate presumes acceptance of, or directly teaches, the scientific consensus on some matters of controversy within the Christian community: namely, modern cosmology, the age of the earth, evolution, and anthropogenic climate change. At the same time, we as authors recognize that in any community of Christians, there is likely a diversity of viewpoints. Our goal is education, not indoctrination. As such, we include opportunities to explore various Christian perspectives within the Integrate units. Reflection assignments and discussion questions are intentionally open-ended, without an expectation that students adopt any one “correct” perspective. We also believe practicing gracious dialogue is more important than winning an argument. For this reason the curriculum includes opportunities for respectful engagement with others who think differently. For tips on how to create a welcoming environment in your community, see biology professor Kerry Fulcher's article **A Pedagogy of Hospitality** (biologos.link/hospitality).

Corequisite Science

While Integrate is flexible and may be used as a standalone resource for enrichment, it is designed to supplement, not replace, science instruction. Students will be prepared to engage with the material in this unit assuming concurrent or previous study of the nature of science.

NGSS Alignment

The **Next Generation Science Standards** (NGSS; biologos.link/ngss) are research-based, cutting-edge K-12 science standards. They set expectations for what students should know and be able to do. While not an NGSS curriculum, Integrate has many points of alignment with NGSS. If you refer to NGSS in your lesson planning, please see the **NGSS Alignment for Integrate** (biologos.link/ngss-alignment).

Vocabulary

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit or in the additional resources. Definitions and explanations are found in the [Unit Glossary](#) at the end of the unit. Many additional terms are included in the main **Integrate Glossary** (biologos.link/glossary).

accommodation	framework view
ancient Near East (ANE)	functional origins
Answers in Genesis	gap theory
appearance of age	general revelation
biblical literalism	genre
Big Bang	heliocentrism
cognitive bias	heresy
cognitive environment	hermeneutics
common descent	inspiration
concordism	Leviathan
cosmic geography	material origins
cosmic temple model	miracle
cosmology	old earth creation (OEC)
creationism	orthodox
creation science	presuppositions
culture	progressive creation
day-age view	Reasons to Believe
doctrine	special creation
eisegesis	special revelation
evolution	theistic evolution (TE)
evolutionary creation (EC)	worldview
exegesis	young earth creationism (YEC)
firmament	

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