



Oculus Station House, New York

Why You Should Study Geography

Imagine going into a large room that is filled with people who are engaged in several different conversations.

Over here, two people really seem to be connecting deeply with each other. In that corner, two other people are in a heated discussion and seem ready to come to blows. Four people in the middle are working together to set up some sort of display. Over there, a small group is looking at pictures on someone's phone; and the people involved really seem to be enjoying themselves.

But you've just arrived, and you have no idea what people are talking about or what they are doing. You think, "If I only knew what is going on here, I'd feel more comfortable. Maybe I could even help or contribute something to a conversation."

So you move around the room, listen to people, and ask some questions. Slowly you get an idea of the different interactions that are taking place. As you get to know people better, you can offer something to some of those conversations. Now that you know what the group setting something up is doing, you offer to help with that project.

This description of entering a large room is something like what you are going to be doing in a few years. You are going to enter a big room called the adult world. Lots of things are going on there.

Some folks get along well, while others have come to blows. Some are developing a project together, but others don't know each other and perhaps don't even speak to each other. If you can understand why things are the way they are in our world, you will be better able to make a positive difference in it.

Helping you better understand our world is the purpose of *Exploring World Geography*. Traditionally, geography deals with such topics as what is a volcano, how much of the world is covered with water, and the definitions of a desert and plate tectonics. Those subjects are elements of physical geography, and you need to understand those subjects to understand the physical world that God made. However, the modern field of geography has expanded to include many elements of human life on this planet, especially as it relates to geography or geographic place. For instance, you can study population geography, cultural geography, political geography, economic geography, rural and urban geography, and, in this course, human geography.

This course deals with two main questions: (1) How has the physical world made a difference in what people have done, how they have lived, and how they live today? (2) How have people made a difference in the physical world, and how are they making a difference in it today?

Journalist and geography writer Robert Kaplan says that geography is the backdrop to human history. Geography is where we live, and it impacts how we live. Geography affects all of us. Some people deny this. They say that geography is only incidental to human interaction. Moreover, with the invention of faster travel and instant worldwide communication, some people say that geography doesn't really matter anymore.

Try telling a soldier who has fought on the desert mountains of Afghanistan that geography doesn't matter. Explain how cotton became king in the pre-Civil War American South without referring to geography. Describe the role of New York City as an international trade and immigration center without referring to its geographic location. Understand the modern Middle East without referring to oil or the existence of Israel. Discuss the immigration issue without referring to a geographic setting. When you look into these and many other issues regarding life on this planet, you will find that geography *does* matter.

Every person can make a profound difference in the lives of others by how they respond to their setting and to the opportunities that God places in their path—a path that runs through geography. Our world—especially the part of it where you live—is where God has placed you. You might wish that you lived in a place with greater natural beauty or with more opportunities for economic advancement, but He has placed you in the location where you are. If you move to another place or region, in that new setting you will find other opportunities and limitations that geography will influence.

The task of living effectively as an adult is before you; serve God by fulfilling that task where you are. We hope that we encourage you to take geography seriously. Be assured of this: if we as Americans do not take geography seriously, other people—including some who have decided to be our enemies—will take it seriously; and that will affect us negatively.

A few key factors help to explain why history and current events have happened the way they

have. The most important is God. The second most important are the decisions and actions that people make. We might also cite family, cultural influences, and religious beliefs. In this mix of factors, one key factor is geography.

We hope that this curriculum will help you understand better this fascinating world in which we live. We hope you will think, “Oh, that's why this country has done this or that” or “It's amazing how that mountain range affects that region.” Knowing something about the geographic settings in which people live will give you empathy. Knowing inspiring stories will encourage you in your own life. Learning what God teaches us about our world helps us live in it. Learning the power of the gospel that offers hope and truth to every tribe and tongue and people and nation will help you redeem the time that you have.

Geography has relevance to current affairs. In the time that we worked on this curriculum, the ruler of Swaziland changed that country's name to Eswatini. The country once known as Macedonia changed its name to the Republic of North Macedonia. Wildfires devastated the geography of Australia. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which many countries accepted eagerly in its early stages, has changed shape and encountered opposition from some countries. Huge demonstrations in Hong Kong protested the way China was governing that city. As we were finishing the development of the curriculum, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world. As you move into adult life, you will need to remain informed and discerning about the issues in which geography plays a part.

Our goal is to inspire you to think broadly and to act boldly, to see your own setting in time and place as an opportunity for growth and adventure or as an obstacle to overcome. We hope that you will envision what God might do through you as He has done through countless others who have lived in their own times and places. Preparing you to live successfully in that big room called the adult world is what we have tried to do in the lessons, the readings, the literature, and the assignments.



Lake Wanaka, New Zealand

How to Use This Curriculum

As you both, parent and student, plan your study using this curriculum, here are some ideas to help you get the most out of it.

This curriculum provides one year's credit in three subjects: geography, English (literature and composition), and worldview. The 150 lessons are divided into thirty units of five lessons each. Each unit has four lessons on geography, and a final lesson on worldview.

Since a typical school year has thirty-six weeks, you have some flexibility in completing the course. The student can take two weeks to complete a unit if they find a topic particularly interesting or when your schedule is especially busy. Families are free to choose how they want to schedule the course, but many families choose to begin a unit on Monday and finish it on Friday.

On the first day of a unit, read the unit introduction. Here you will find a brief overview of the unit; a list of lessons for that unit; a Bible passage to memorize; a list of books used with that unit; choices for a project for that unit; and, when a literature title is begun, an introduction to that book.

After reading the introduction, choose a project to complete by the end of the unit and make a schedule for how to complete it. Find the memory

work for the week in the Bible translation of your choice.

Complete the following each day:

- Read the lesson for the day.
- Complete all of the *Gazetteer*, geography, worldview, and literature assignments for the lesson.
- If you are using the optional *Student Review*, complete the assignment(s) for that lesson.
- Work on your Bible memorization and on your chosen project.

On the last day of each unit, the student will recite or write the memory work and complete the project for the unit.

The curriculum includes the *Exploring World Geography Gazetteer*. This volume contains maps of the continents and regions we discuss in the text, a section on each country of the world, and original source material that we assign once per unit. The Assignments section at the end of each day's lesson includes the *Gazetteer* assignment when appropriate.

You will need to plan carefully what the student does each day. For instance, every fifth day includes

reading the worldview lesson and answering the review questions, finishing the project for the unit, writing or reciting the memory verse for that unit, and taking the geography quiz for that unit.

In twelve of the units the student will also need to finish the literature title they have been reading, answer the review questions on it, and read the literary analysis for that book. In six units, the student will also need to take the geography, English, and worldview exams over the previous five units. Plus, the student will need to study for all of these exams.

Instead of waiting until the last day of a unit to complete all of these assignments, students can spread out the work load and make it easier to complete. For example, students can complete their unit project on Day 4 of the unit. She might also want to plan her reading so that she finishes the literature title on Day 4 of the unit and completes the review questions and literary analysis that day. We have provided the tools for your study of these subjects. How you complete the curriculum is ultimately up to your family determining what is the best approach for you to take.

An assignment checklist is available as a free download on our website (notgrass.com/ewglinks).

Worldview Lessons

In the assignments for several of the lessons in each unit are thought questions regarding worldview. We recommend that the student have a Bible notebook (wire-bound or 3-ring binder) in which she copies each question and writes a response to the question. Alternatively, the parent may choose to have the student read the question aloud and give an answer orally. However, writing down the questions and answers will probably help the student remember the questions and answers better.

As part of our worldview survey, we look at several religious systems that people practice in the world besides Christianity. We look at these other faith systems from the perspective of outsiders.

We have never been part of these groups, and the information we share is the result of our research on these subjects. Those who adhere to these faith systems might see inaccuracies or misplaced emphases in our treatment of them. It is not our purpose to misrepresent these faiths or to create straw men that we can easily knock down in an attempt to show the superiority of Christianity.

We have attempted to refrain from using demeaning language or from saying anything like, “We can’t believe that intelligent people believe these ridiculous ideas, but apparently they do.” We want to show respect for the people who hold these beliefs, even as we express our disagreement with these beliefs and why we believe that Christianity is true. We are not ashamed of the gospel, and we want to keep the door open for civil discussions with those of other faiths in the hope that we can encourage everyone in the pursuit of truth.

Map Skills Assignments

A map skills assignment comes at the end of one lesson in most units, usually on the fourth day of the unit. Their purpose is to help the student better understand and utilize maps. The lessons in Unit 2 have a good deal of information about maps, so the map skills assignments begin in Unit 3.

We recommend that the student create a map skills notebook or folder for these activities.

Tips on Bible Memorization

Each unit of *Exploring World Geography* gives a Bible passage to memorize. Here are some tips on memorization for the student. Pay attention and internalize what the verses mean. It will be much easier to memorize thoughts that you understand than to see them as a string of words that have no meaning to you. Write the verses on index cards. Keep these handy to use when you have a spare moment. Copying out the verses is a good exercise, especially if you learn visually.

Draw pictures illustrating the verses. Ask another person to read the verses to you. Ask another person to listen to you and correct your recitation. Working on memorization consistently in small chunks of time over several days works much better than last-minute cramming.

Unit Projects

Each unit (except Unit 3) has three choices for a project, always including a writing assignment. Parents can decide how many writing assignments the student must complete to fulfill the English credit of *Exploring World Geography*. We recommend that you choose the writing assignment as the project a minimum of six times throughout the course. The other project choices include a wide variety of activities: building models, cooking, field trips, volunteer opportunities, and more, all of which will enhance and expand what the student is learning in the course.

The projects relate to the material in the unit. Where applicable, we note the lesson from which the project is drawn. The student should choose a project at the beginning of the unit and work on it throughout the unit. The student may need to look ahead at the relevant section of the lesson to get started on the project.

As you choose projects unit by unit, take the opportunity for the student to try new things and expand her skills. If she has never made a model out of STYROFOAM™, or seldom done any cooking, or doesn't know how to make a video, this is a great opportunity!

The student should complete each project at a high school level. Some of these assignments could be given to an elementary school student and the results would be on an elementary school level. The student should complete the work with care and research and attention to accuracy, creativity, and excellence. Throwing something together in a haphazard fashion is not appropriate. Whether the student spends his time writing an essay or building

a model, he should use his mind and hands to create something he can be proud of.

Student Review Pack

The Student Review Pack includes three books to help the parent and student measure the student's progress through the course and understanding of the material: the *Student Review Book*, the *Quiz and Exam Book*, and the *Guide for Parents and Answer Key*. Using these books is optional, but you will likely find them useful.

The *Student Review Book* contains review questions on each lesson, review questions on some of the source documents in the *Gazetteer*, review questions and analysis of the literature, and a map skills assignment for most units.

The *Quiz and Exam Book* has:

- a geography quiz for each unit that covers the first four lessons of that unit and is drawn from the lesson review questions for those four lessons,
- a geography exam covering every five units that is drawn from the quizzes for those units,
- an English exam covering the literary analysis and questions for the books read every five units, and
- a worldview exam every five units covering the review questions for the five worldview lessons in those units.

How We Present Scripture

The most important material in this course are the studies from God's Word. Understanding world geography and literature is important, but how we live before God is the most important issue before each one of us. We want to help you as you do that.

We believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and our desire is to present the Bible in all of its truth, wisdom, and power. We strive in all we do simply to be Christians. We are on a quest to understand the truth that God has provided in His Word.

If you read something in this curriculum that differs from what your family believes, take the opportunity to discuss the issue and search the Scriptures together. We welcome your feedback. If you believe that we have written something in error, please email us so that we can learn together the truth that will set us free.

Notes on the Literature

We chose works of literature that illustrate geography in various places around the world. As the student reads the books, she should take special note of geographic features such as lakes, rivers, mountains, the region of the world, the culture of the people, and how these features fit into the story. The setting of a work of literature is a place in geography, so the study of geography and the study of literature will enhance each other.

Worldview also plays a part in the study of literature. As the student reads each work, he should notice the worldview of the characters; clues to the worldview of the author; and how the book supports, informs, or challenges his worldview. Thus the study of literature and the study of worldview will enhance and support each other.

Appreciation

I am indebted to all those who have helped with this project. My wife, Charlene, wrote the lesson about her ancestor, Pierre Boucher of Boucherville, Quebec, Canada. She proofread the curriculum with me and provided invaluable input in many other ways. Our son John collected illustrations and laid out the pages, lessons, and units. Our daughter Bethany helped to develop the original plan for the curriculum, selected the literature to include, and wrote most of the literary analysis and the literature review questions. Our daughter Mary Evelyn designed the covers and proofread the curriculum. I also want to thank Dena Russell and David Shelton for their vital assistance in developing this curriculum and Sean Killen for producing the beautiful maps in the *Gazetteer*.

Exploring World Geography completes the cycle of Notgrass high school social studies curriculum that includes *Exploring World History*, *Exploring America*, *Exploring Government*, and *Exploring Economics*. This series began with the publication of *Exploring America* in 2002. What a joyful ride it has been.

I will forever be grateful for the thousands of students who have used these materials and for the countless words of appreciation we have received. May the Lord receive all the praise. Thank you and thank Him.

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