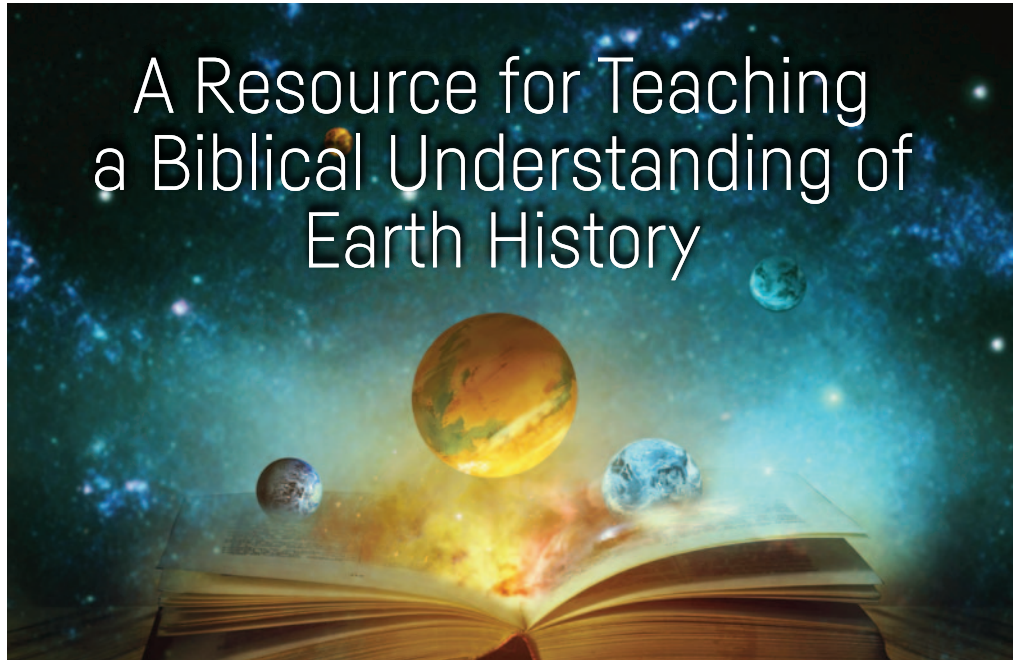




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THE GEOSCIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE:

A Resource for Teaching a Biblical Understanding of Earth History



Just before the North American Division Educators Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A., on August 7–10, 2023, more than 40 passionate North American Division (NAD) science teachers embarked on a journey with Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) scientists to explore the magnificent landscapes of the Petrified Forest National Park, the Grand Canyon, Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument, and more.¹ The goal of the field trip was to offer participants a firsthand experience that enhanced their appreciation and comprehension of geology and the history of the Earth. Led by GRI Director Ronny Nalin (PhD in Earth Sciences), and GRI scientists Ben Clausen (MS in Geology, PhD in Physics), Tim Standish (PhD in Environmental Biology and Public Policy), and Raúl Esperante (PhD in Paleontology), the goal of this tour experience was to help prepare teachers to integrate faith and science effectively in their classrooms.

At the Petrified Forest National Park in northeastern

Arizona, teachers observed and were fascinated by the remains of trees that had turned to stone, revealing the wonders of natural transformation. Here, they discussed the process of fossilization, how long it takes for wood to petrify, and how fossils paint a picture of past animal interactions and their environment. Walking amongst these fossilized tree logs provided an opportunity to discuss processes and sediment transport rates.

The trip through the breathtaking Grand Canyon in northern Arizona and Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument north of Flagstaff, Arizona, offered a remarkable setting for discussions surrounding the origins debate and the geologic record. As they gazed into the vast chasm, the educators could not help but be humbled by the scale and complexity of the Earth's geological history. They were presented with the unique opportunity to study the intricate rock formations that could be viewed through the lens of catastrophism or gradualism. They also observed footprints and other fossils embed-

ded in the rock while hiking down into the canyon on the South Kaibab Trail.

“As an instructor of grades 1–8,” said Rachel Jameson, teacher at Edenville Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School (Michigan, U.S.A.), “I will make a greater effort to give my students field experience in the sciences and to teach them that although we may not be able to explain all the evidence we find, we can still trust what God says in His Word.”²

After experiencing the wonders of nature and absorbing the information presented, the educators engaged in in-depth discussions and workshops by Drs. Nalin, Clausen, Standish, and Esperante. Together, the presenters and educators explored ways to effectively blend faith and science in classroom instruction and were reminded to respect science while remaining faithful to God and the Bible.

“As a science teacher,” said Joel Shetler, incoming science instructor at Spencerville Academy (Maryland, U.S.A.), “I wear two beautiful hats, one as a scientist, where I want to present evidence and help students learn how to research and determine what to do with that evidence, but also as a teacher in the Adventist community, where I bring in the faith side of it. I show how the evidence relates to our beliefs but that ultimately, we must keep learning and researching.”

Armed with fresh perspectives and a commitment to nurturing their students’ spiritual and scientific growth, the participants left with a renewed desire to ignite a transformative spark in the education community. They are prepared to enrich the lives of their students by fostering a deeper appreciation for the natural world and its Creator. With the lessons learned from this adventure, these educators are poised to guide the next generation on a path of holistic understanding, where faith and science complement each other in the quest for growth in knowledge and wisdom.

The mission of the Geoscience Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is to seek, develop, and share knowledge with the global church. Established in 1958, the Institute sought to fulfill a specific, unique purpose: “to explore the natural

world, seeking to develop and share an understating of nature consistent with the biblical teaching as expressed in the Church’s statement of fundamental belief on creation.” To this end, GRI scientists work to address questions and seek evidence concerning origins within the context of revelation and biblical foundations. Through conducting research and then communicating results, the GRI provides a valued service and is a critical resource for Adventist educators teaching and studying sciences: biology, ecology and conservation, intelligent design, geology, paleontology, cosmology, faith and science, and other sciences.³

GRI provides several resources to help educators guide students as they explore the natural world. These resources can be used to plan and supplement lessons for various natural science subjects. For more information on GRI resources, please visit their website at <http://www.grisda.org> and subscribe to their newsletter. ✉

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GRI Resources Available to Educators

The following resources are available for educators and can be found on the GRI website:

Books: <https://www.grisda.org/books>

Articles: <https://www.grisda.org/articles>

Posters: <https://www.grisda.org/posters>

Website collection: <https://www.grisda.org/top-ten-websites>

PowerPoints: <https://www.grisda.org/powerpoints>

Photo Gallery: <https://www.grisda.org/galleries>

Videos: <https://www.grisda.org/videos>

Resources for Kids: <https://www.grisda.org/for-kids>

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Versions of this article have been published in several Adventist resources online. Adapted for use in *The Journal of Adventist Education*®(JAE).

2. Names of educators quoted have been used with permission.

3. GRI began in 1958 on the campus of Andrews University. The Institute was called the “Committee on Teaching Paleontology and Geology.” In 1962, it became the Geoscience Research Institute, and in 1980, it moved to Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.), where it currently resides. For more, see Ariel A. Roth and L. James Gibson, “Geoscience Research Institute,” *ESDA* (2022): <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=8JFT>.