



The story of God is essentially the narrative of God's interaction and intervention with his people.

Throughout history, the story of God has been identified by these themes throughout Scripture: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. This is how the biblical narrative is traced and how we can reference God's work throughout human history.<sup>1</sup>

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## DISCUSSION #1: Creation

The story of God is essentially the narrative of God's interaction and intervention with his people. Throughout history, the story of God has been identified by these themes throughout Scripture: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. This is how the biblical narrative is traced and how we can reference God's work throughout human history.

This discussion focuses on the story of God beginning with Creation. Though God's existence is eternal, our story begins with God setting the stage by creating everything we see and know. His final act of Creation was creating humankind in His likeness and declaring that it was all perfectly good.

### MY STORY | Starting Place

What is something you created, remodeled, or built that you are especially proud of?

### DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Read Genesis Chapters 1 and 2.

The story of God, as we know it, begins with God already existing. All we know is that God was present and created the formless world.

There is great debate over the length of time of Genesis 1:1-2. Some say it was all the same day, and others believe there could have been many years between them. What do you think? Why do you believe that?

In Genesis 1:3-25, it repeatedly says that "God saw that it was good." Why do you think this was included throughout the creation narrative? Why do you think it says God "saw" that it was good, instead of simply declaring it good?

Genesis 1:26-31 gives the account of the creation of humankind (man and woman).

Read the passage again and make a list of the various reasons God created them.

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<sup>1</sup> For further reading, exploration, and research here are deeper resources: Richter, Sandra L. *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008).

Can you extrapolate WHY God created them? Did he need them? If so, what was missing before He created them?

Genesis 1 is like a 50,000ft. picture of creation. Genesis 2 is like a 10,000ft. zoom in on the creation of humankind. Make a list of key details shared in this closer shot.

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Talk about what it would have been like to see all this happening. What does it say about the nature and character of God?

What does it say about the nature of the various “good things” God created?

What does it say about humankind and our role in the story of God?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Go out into nature and find something to simply observe and be in awe of.

# DISCUSSION #2: Fall

The story of God is essentially the narrative of God's interaction and intervention with his people. Throughout history, the story of God has been identified by these themes throughout Scripture: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. This is how the biblical narrative is traced and how we can reference God's work throughout human history.

The second act of the story of God is the Fall or when despair and brokenness entered based on the tragic actions of humankind. This event marks the separation of humanity from God through their choice of rebellion against him. The choice of disobedience and rebellion made by Adam and Eve is the first occurrence of human sin in Scripture.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Do you remember a story from your childhood that you did something wrong and had to confess and admit your wrongdoing? Please share.

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Read Genesis Chapter 3.

Verses 1-7 tell the story of Adam and Eve falling into sin.

Discuss the nature of the dialog between Eve and the serpent. Note the types of questions he was asking her, and the commentary he was giving on what God actually said.

Just for fun, contrast Eve's conversation with the serpent and Jesus' dialog with Satan during his temptation in Luke 4:1-13.

Verse 6 shares WHY Eve ate the fruit and gave it to Adam.

Are there parallels to this and why we often make wrong, or sinful choices in our lives?

Where was Adam during this dialog? Why do you think there is no record of him saying anything?

Verses 8-13 tell of how they were caught and confessed to God what they had done. Note the tone of God. How does He sound? Is he more angry, sad, or something else?

Since God is all knowing, why do you think he asks so many questions about what happened (as if he didn't know)?

What other observations can you make from this passage?

Verses 14-19 tell of the consequences (or curses) for their tragic decision.

Make a note of the outcome for Adam, Eve, and the serpent.

Were the consequences simple punishment or did they communicate or accomplish something else?

What could life have been like if this tragic event hadn't happened?

Verses 20-24 close out the story with God's love and provision for Adam and Eve. God replaced their fig leaves (v.7) with animal skins (v.20). Is there significance to this?

How was casting Adam and Eve out of the garden actually an act of love?

### **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Half truths and false commentary are very dangerous. Thinking of Eve's dialog with the serpent, are there truths of God that you might struggle to believe and/or are tempted to believe a different commentary?

Christian theology teaches that we are sinful by nature (from Adam and Eve) and by personal choices (the decisions we make). What parallels from Adam and Eve's story do you see in your own life?

### **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Read the news and look at the world around you this week. What consequences of the serpent's lie do you see around us? "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

# DISCUSSION #3: Redemption

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What can be done to unite creation back to its Creator? Redemption is the promise of God to restore this relationship first, because full communion with him was his desire for creation—and second, because reconciliation with him would require perfect holiness, something only he is and something only he is able to provide.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

We all love stories of restoration and happy endings. What book or movie comes to mind when you think of restoration and hope restored?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

As tragic as Genesis 3 is, God points to the restoration He will provide (through Jesus) in Genesis 3:15. Jesus' victory will definitely "crush Satan's head" and bring the redemption we desperately need. Why do you think God took so many years to fulfill this promise? What was accomplished in that time period? What do you make of all the confusion and damage done before Jesus physically came on the scene?

Read Romans 3:21-23, 6:23, and 8:1-2.

Collectively they spell out the amazing victory Jesus claimed for us.

Make a list of insights from these passages.

How does Romans 8:1-2 directly tie to Genesis 3?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Mentally revisit and talk about how Jesus found you and brought redemption and hope to your life. What, specifically, were you most thankful for in the early days? How did that change over the years?

How do you express your gratitude to God for all that He has done in your life?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Have you ever told someone else about the redemption Jesus brought you? If not, think through HOW you would tell your story. Maybe even write it out. If you have, is there someone in your life that you could naturally share your story with this week?

# DISCUSSION #4: Restoration

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Restoration is the promise of God for all things to be made new by the redemption offered in Christ. This includes all of creation, not just humanity. Restoration (or new creation) is promised at the final judgment, which is also known as the consummation of his redeeming work—the final act of God in condemning sin and death forever.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What earthly, or worldly, burden do long most to be free of? Why that above all others?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Isaiah 43 (the whole chapter) paints a beautiful picture of the restoration of God's people. It is in the Old Testament, so it points forward to the hope that Jesus will bring.

Read the chapter and make note of key observations.

The collection of Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 and Revelation 21-22:5 paint a similar picture of our restoration secured by Jesus. What "new hope" does Jesus bring? What have we been restored to? (There are many things...)

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

What positive reality is in your life today that you know is because of the hope Jesus has provided?

What are you excited for on the horizon as you live into all Jesus has restored you to?

Read Revelation 21-22:5 again. Discuss what this amazing reality on the horizon will be like. Talk openly with wild wonder!

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Is there a Christian in your life who might have lost hope in the fullness of what Jesus has secured for them? How can you humbly wade in to encourage them?