



OVERVIEW

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S LARGER STORY

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INTRODUCTION

As we step more deeply into what it means to pursue the mission of God for people, we are confronted with the somewhat regularly occurring situation of leading people through an introduction of the basic message of the Bible. Whether it be used for a curious unbeliever or

an uninformed believer, an overview perspective of the Bible is often a great place to begin to answer questions.

This resource is designed to provide help in the planning for and implementation of a thematic overview of the Bible. It is our prayer that it provides insight to those who would lead others on a journey of discovering the overall flow of the Biblical narrative. We also believe that this type of journey is not a one-size-fits-all process. Leading people into a discovery of the Biblical narrative requires prayer, seeking of wisdom, and planning for how best to lead a specific person through this content.

CONTEXT

It is important, when leading someone in an overview of the Bible, to set an appropriate context for this type of journey. What we mean by “context” is that you strive to establish a certain kind of relational environment with the person as you discuss the Bible. It is deeply important that you view this journey with the individual to whom you are presenting as a *discipleship* journey. Do your best to think through the way that you will discuss these principles with your friend, so that, even *how* you interact with them would reflect something of the nature of God and His desire for a personal relationship with them. Here are a few bullet point considerations:

- **Personal** - begin by asking them to share of their own spiritual journey. Discover what led them to this place. Ask them about the spiritual questions that most intrigue them. If they are willing, ask them to share about their past experiences with “religion.” This communicates that you value them and their journey, and it also helps you to understand what areas might need to be addressed so that they can come to a clearer understanding of the Bible. As you move through the Bible, take the necessary time to pause, listen, and ask questions of your friend in order to better understand how they are processing the information.
- **Relational** - The Bible is uniquely written to communicate to all people, no matter where they might be spiritually. This means that you need to listen to and learn of your friend as you share these truths with him/her. As much as you are able, you want your conversations to be *relational* in context, that it might lead him/her to a meaningful and relational encounter with God. This kind of encounter is radically different from formal religion and it will help them to understand the relational God who desires a restored relationship with them.
- **Informal** - Remember that this is a person who is on a spiritual journey, not a student seeking academic information. Will they need to hear and consider information? Absolutely. However, it is important to note that *how* you communicate the message of the Bible most accurately reflects *what* the essential message of the Bible is. The

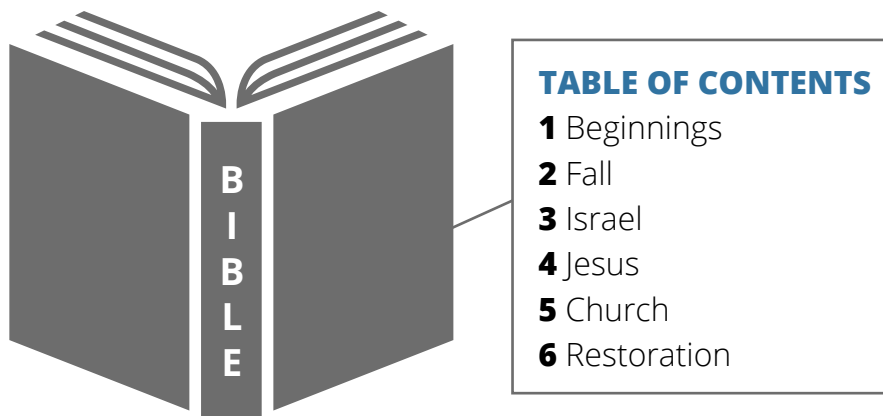
Bible is not presented to us as a collection of dogmas or spiritual ideas to learn about, but rather a communication to mankind from a loving God who desires to restore them to the loving relationship that He originally intended for them. With that in mind, you should strive to present this information in personal, engaging, and informal ways. You want to help people understand what the Bible says, but never in a way that might only facilitate a sterile consideration of propositional ideas.

FORMAT

The first section of this overview is a section called “Getting To Know The Book” where we provide some helpful material that would be helpful for someone who does not know the basic information about the Bible and how it came to us. It is very important to discuss this with your friend, as many people have based their view of the Bible on false information and negative perspectives of it.

This document then divides the basic overview of the Bible into six primary transitions; these transitions will be referred to as “chapters.” Even in the language that we use, we want to reinforce the “Larger Story” of God with relationship to individual people in real human history. Constantly, referring to the “Story” and the “chapters” that make up the “Story” are all very useful tools in helping people to personally relate to the Bible rather than simply considering it as a proposition of ideas to believe or dogmas to follow.

Due to this objective, we want to speak about the Bible in terms of “God’s Larger Story” which is made up of six major “chapters.” These “chapters” represent the shifts and changes in human history from God’s perspective. Each chapter holds new information about God’s view of humanity and human history with relationship to His plan and purposes in them. Because of this, the overview of the Bible will look at each chapter to better understand 1) who God is, 2) what His plan is, and 3) how we can be relationally restored to Him.



As you look more closely at each of these “chapters” in this document, you will notice that we have organized the content of each chapter into either a “short” or a “long” track. This is designed to help you plan your times with your friend with regard to how often you plan to meet with him/her and what to cover in your discussions. If there is no specific time consideration that you have to follow (i.e. you have to complete this overview before they move away from the area in five weeks), we recommend that you use the “Long Track”. We recommend this because it provides a much better pace to the information flow that your friend has to process, gives more time for discussion, and allows you better help your friend truly understand what the Bible is saying to him/her.

TERMINOLOGY

As you lead your friend through the overview of the Bible, consider adopting a much more relatable and modern use of terminology. In place of theological terminology that carries much baggage, seek to use easily understandable language that will better help the individual grasp the essential meaning of the Bible’s main concepts. Any time that you plan to discuss a theologically rich concept, consider how you would explain it to a 10-12 year old child. This process will help you to better rephrase the concept in simple yet clear terminology.

Consider this chart as a suggestion for how to communicate a few of the Bible’s central doctrinal words.

DOCTRINAL WORD	REPLACEMENT
Sacrifice	Paying the price for someone else’s wrong
Sin	Falling short of God
Salvation	To be brought back into a right relationship with God
Grace	A free gift
Love	Sacrificial giving to benefit others

TIMELINE

Throughout the various “chapters” of God’s story, we recognize a unifying “spiritual timeline” of sorts. This timeline is where the plan and purposes of God intersect with human history.

We also believe that once sin came into the world, mankind is fundamentally broken, choosing a life of independence from God's timeline and preferring their own timeline of life. We want to visually represent this as we take people through the overview of the Bible, as it will likely provide a simple reminder of the "Larger Story" of God and how our "Smaller Story" must be reconciled to His.



GETTING TO KNOW THE BOOK

Objective 1: Set the relational "tone" for this overview. Make sure to invite your friend to share about his/her spiritual journey, spiritual questions, even also the struggles he/she might have with God and/or religion.

Objective 2: A basic layout of the Bible

Objective 3: A basic introduction to how we received the Bible and what it claims to be

Passages: 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Peter 1:21

BASIC LAYOUT OF THE BIBLE

Most people who are interested in the Bible have little working knowledge of the Bible and its layout. It's often helpful to give them a basic layout of the Bible and some basic instructions on how to navigate the Bible.

If you are operating out of a paper Bible, you can have your friend navigate to the Table of Contents. From there, you can direct them to the two major sections of the Bible: The *Old Testament* and The *New Testament*. In a very basic sense, the Old Testament is mainly about the nation of Israel. The New Testament is mainly about Jesus and the Church. You can also communicate that the two major sections form one big story about God's loving pursuit of people in order to have a relationship with them.

Note: If they are looking at the Bible through a Bible App, you should be able to have them navigate to a screen listing all of the books of the Bible. You can explain that the Bible is divided into the two major sections between the books of *Malachi* and *Matthew*.

It's also helpful to explain that each book is laid out with chapter numbers separating major sections in each book and verse numbers representing various locations within each chapter.

Bible scholars have done this to make it easy to find specific places within the Bible. You can actually navigate to a specific location, like 2 Timothy 3:16.

HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE?

The formalizing of what we call “the Bible” was a slow process (1,400 years, 40+ authors), but there are some important details about it that we know. Here are some bullet points to consider:

- Written by 40 different men (Moses, various prophets, Paul, Luke, John, Peter, etc).
- Written in 3 different languages (manuscripts evidence of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic origins).
- Written over a 1,400 year span.
- Written in various literary genres (narrative, poetic, didactic, apocalyptic, prophetic, epistle, etc)
- Written for many different reasons (to inform people about God; to inform people about life, meaning, purpose; to explain how to think and live; to combat false teaching, to foretell the future).

We can recognize a few key events in history that specifically led to the ultimate sealing of the Bible in its present state. Consider using the information in this chart as a basic timeline of when and how we formally received the “Bible”, in terms of the completed canon.

DATE	EVENT
AD 95-235	Various early church leaders (<i>Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, etc</i>) mention and use the various books of the New Testament.
AD 363	<i>Council of Laodicea</i> concludes that only the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches.
AD 397	<i>Council of Carthage</i> officially prohibits the use of any other variation of the “Bible” to be read.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE CLAIM TO BE?

From 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul gives us an understanding of how the Bible came to us. Although there were various writers over a span of 1400 years, there is actually only one author, God Himself. These verses provide for us a clear perspective on, not only the importance of the Bible, but also the motivation behind it. We understand that all of the Bible

is given by God and it has a number of foci: to teach, reprove, correct, and train in righteousness. The key phrase in this passage, related to the concept of revelation, is the phrase "God-breathed." This unique phrase in the Greek New Testament is quite vivid as it portrays God revealing Himself to us through His own Word that literally comes up from within His very being - "God-breathed."

2 Peter 1:21 also gives us a simple description of the process of specific revelation through human beings. This process is extremely important because it explains the key components of the doctrine of revelation:

- *"not produced by the will of man"* Of first importance in this verse is the notion that the Bible did not originate with people. Although people assisted God in the physical task of writing the Bible, the content (even the words themselves) came from God's supernatural work in them.
- *"men spoke from God"* In this next clause, we read that the physical process was through the avenue of people who God selected and supernaturally empowered to communicate His very words and truths to all people.
- *"carried along by the Holy Spirit"* Lastly, this verse explicitly states that the Bible came through the empowering of the Holy Spirit, both in the sense that He gave content and also that He empowered the process.

THE FINAL QUESTION

If the Bible claims to exclusively be the revealed Word of the living God to us, and He revealed it so we might have a relationship with Him, don't we owe it to ourselves to consider these claims?

CHAPTER 1 - BEGINNINGS

Review: Before you prepare new content to share with your friend, make sure to remind yourself of the Larger Story of God and the “point in time” that you will be talking about. Referring to the timeline can help you remember the place in time, from God’s perspective, that you are discussing, and it also can help you stay on point without speaking to issues that will be covered in future chapters.



SHORT TRACK

Passage: Genesis 1:1-2:25

Topic: Creation of all things

Summary: God existed before all things in an intimate relationship between three unified beings: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. All of God’s creative acts came out of this dynamic intimate relationship. God created all things by His power alone. He is perfect and nothing He does is bad. His power is demonstrated in creation as He spoke all things into existence out of nothing and with nothing - He is the only true *creator*, which is much different than a builder. He created people to be like Him (not the same as Him, but like Him) so that we could relate to Him and other people in the same personal way that God relates to Himself. He also wanted us to rule over the earth that He created. In other words, God wanted us to serve Him while we were in close friendship with Him.

When we look at the creation account, we find that a new focus is highlighted in the creation of mankind. The pattern of God’s creative acts shifts when He comes to humanity, and this shift is significant for us to recognize and understand. God demonstrated something unique about humanity in the way He created them and in the role that He gave them to rule over everything else. This uniqueness stems from the fact that we are like God or, in other words, image bearers of God. It is important that we investigate and consider what it

means to be image bearers of God and how that plays into the rest of the Biblical narrative.

Themes:

1. God existed before all things in an intimate relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. God needs nothing to survive.
3. God created everything out of nothing, but His Word
4. God has authority over all things because He created everything.
5. The Word of God is life giving.
6. God loves people and He wanted them to be in deep relationship with Him
7. God wants to fill the whole earth with His love through people.

Challenges: Be prepared for potential discussion/questions regarding origins, specifically in the area of the Big Bang Theory and Evolution. These have become the standard challenges to the Biblical Worldview and will likely be a topic of interest for your friend. It is important to note that in many regards, this debate over these two issues have led to many people disregarding the *essential* claims of the creation account because of Christian's unwarranted dogmatic stance on these issues.

LONG TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: Genesis 1:1-25

Topic: Creation of the heavens and the earth

Summary: God preexisted before all things. He is perfect and nothing He does is bad. God created all things by His power alone. His power is demonstrated in creation as He spoke all things into existence out of nothing and with nothing - He is the only true *creator*, which is much different than a builder. He created people to be like Him (not the same as Him, but like Him) so that we could relate to Him and other people in a personal way. He also wanted us to rule over the

earth that He created. In other words, God wanted us to serve Him while we were in close friendship with Him.

Themes:

1. God existed before all things; therefore, He needing nothing to survive.
2. God created everything out of nothing but His Word.
3. God has authority over all things because He created everything.

SESSION 2

Passage: Genesis 1:26-2:25

Topic: Creation of mankind

Summary: When we look at the creation account of humanity, we find that a new focus is highlighted. First, the phrase *“Let **us** make man in our image”* indicates that God does not exist as a single being, but as a group of relational beings who are in perfect unity. This perfect relational union between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit was in existence before anything else. Therefore, all of God’s creative acts came out of this dynamic intimate relationship.

Second, the pattern of God’s creative acts shifts when He comes to humanity, and this shift is significant for us to recognize and understand. God demonstrated something unique about humanity in the way He created them and in the role that He gave them to rule over everything else. This uniqueness stems from the fact that we are like God or, in other words, image bearers of God. It is important that we investigate and consider what it means to be image bearers of God and how that plays into the rest of the Biblical narrative.

Themes:

1. God exists as a group of relational beings where there is perfect unity between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.
2. God loves people and He wants them to be in deep relationship with Him.
3. God wants to fill the whole earth with His love through people.

CHAPTER 1 NOTES:

CHAPTER 2 - FALL

Review: Before you prepare new content to share with your friend, make sure to remind yourself of where you are at in the Larger Story of God. Take time to refer to the timeline so that you can provide a clear reference point for your friend, in order that they may better understand what you will be talking about.



SHORT TRACK

Passage: Genesis 3, Ezekiel 28:11-19

Topic: People chose independence from God and God promised to restore all things

Summary: Satan comes onto the scene as angel who had rejected the authority of God and the relationship with God for a life of independence. This put him in a position as God's enemy. In the prophet Ezekiel's prophecy found in Ezekiel 28:11, he is referred to as the King of Tyre, which is a reference to false deity (Baal) of the people of Tyre, *Malquart*, which means "King of the City." Ezekiel was referring to this false King - who is Satan, the fallen angel. It is he who approached Adam and Eve and tempted them to follow him in his path of independence from God.

Adam and Eve chose to disregard God's authority and walk independently of Him. They listened to Satan's lies and followed their own thinking. Because God is perfect, He does not allow sin in His presence, and He had to judge Adam and Eve for their independence. The result was a separation ("death") from God and a loss of their close relationship with Him, which included their position with Him and their friendship with him. They were now destined for physical death that would also leave them eternally separated from God and His love. This choice not only affected them, but all of their offspring as well. In spite of their separation from God, God gave a promise to mankind. God promised to send someone who would deal with Satan and provide a way for people to be restored to a relationship with Him.

Themes:

1. Independence from God brings relational separation from Him.
2. Satan chose independence from God and, as God's enemy, seeks to bring that same death into our lives.
3. The choice of Adam and Eve affected the entire human race.
4. God promised to provide a way to restore people back to Himself.
5. God's promise was not one of many options to consider to be restored; it was the only option to be restored.

LONG TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: Genesis 3, Ezekiel 28:11-19

Topic: People chose independence from God

Summary: Satan comes onto the scene as angel who had rejected the authority of God and the relationship with God for a life of independence. This put him in a position as God's enemy. In the prophet Ezekiel's prophecy found in Ezekiel 28:11, he is referred to as the King of Tyre, which is a reference to false deity (Baal) of the people of Tyre, *Malquart*, which means "King of the City". Ezekiel was referring to this false King - who is Satan, the fallen angel. It is he who approached Adam and Eve and tempted them to follow him in his path of independence from God.

Adam and Eve chose to disregard God's authority and walk independently of Him. They listened to Satan's lies and followed their own thinking. Because God is perfect, He does not allow sin in His presence, and He had to judge Adam and Eve for their independence. The result was a separation ("death") from God and a loss of their close relationship with Him, which included their position with Him and their friendship with him. They were now destined for physical death that would also leave them eternally separated from God and His love. This choice not only affected them, but all of their offspring as well. We are all born in sin, receiving this from Adam and Eve.

Themes:

1. Independence from God brings relational separation from Him.
2. Satan chose independence from God and, as God's enemy, seeks to bring that same death into our lives.
3. The choice of Adam and Eve affected the entire human race.

SESSION 2

Passage: Genesis 3:15

Topic: God promised to restore all things

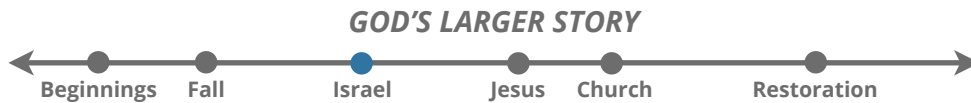
Summary: In the midst of failure, sin, fear, shame, blaming, and separation from God, God gave the first humans a promise. Because of their choice, it has placed all people to this day in a terrible predicament of being separated from God. Yet, God alone can offer a solution to their problem. We must remember, all people are all separated from God and can do nothing to fix their problem! For Adam and Eve, it was right at this point that God offered to send someone who would deal with Satan and provide a way for people to be restored to a relationship with God. This is a theme that begins in Genesis 3:15, but will be further explained throughout the Bible.

Themes:

1. God promised to provide a way to restore people back to Himself.
2. God's promise was not one of many options to consider to be restored; it was the only option to be restored.

CHAPTER 3 - ISRAEL

Review: Before you prepare new content to share with your friend, make sure to remind yourself of where you are at in the Larger Story of God. Take time to refer to the timeline so that you can provide a clear reference point for your friend, in order that they may better understand what you will be talking about.



SHORT TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-6, 22:1-14

Topic: Abraham, the father of Israel

Summary: In this chapter of God's Larger Story to restore people to Himself, He chose to raise up the nation of Israel through Abraham and his descendants to show and tell the world who He is. He also promised that, through one of Abraham's descendants, He would save the world. This directly connects back to that first promise that God gave to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15.

As we study Abraham, we are also instructed in one of the main issues that God is looking for in us - the issue of faith. Abraham demonstrated faith in God and His promise to bring the Redeemer through his offspring in two ways. First, Abraham believed God that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. One of those descendants would be the Redeemer. The result of this faith in God was that God gave Abraham a right-standing before Himself, total acceptance based on Abraham's belief in God's Word. Second, Abraham demonstrated faith in God and His promise when he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac through whom the Redeemer would come. The key component of this story is how God responds to Abraham's faith by providing a ram to die in the place of Isaac. Both of these stories will be examples that you will want to remind them of when you teach them about Jesus.

Themes:

1. The promised Redeemer that God would send to save mankind would come through the family of Abraham.
2. Belief in what God says about the Redeemer results in being restored to a relationship with God.
3. God provides a substitute to pay for the sins of people (Isaac deserved to die for his sin, yet God provided a ram as a replacement for Isaac).
4. People can respond to this substitute by believing it.

SESSION 2

Passage: Exodus 19-20

Topic: The establishment of the Law

Summary: Through a series of events over 400 years, Abraham's descendants grew to millions of people (the nation of Israel) and were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up a deliverer for His people (Moses) to lead Israel out of Egypt. As the Israelites moved toward the land that God promised to Abraham (The Promise Land), they began to act out against God, choosing a life of independence from Him. They desired the old land of Egypt over trusting God into the promised land. They failed to rest in God and His holiness for their lives. God instituted the Law for Israel to make a distinction between His people and the surrounding nations. The heart of this Law was love for both God and others. Consequently, over time, it showed the Israelites' lack of ability to love God and others according to God's design. It exposed their sin and their constant need to be pursuing Him.

Themes:

1. God provides pictures of the promised Redeemer throughout the Old Testament in the lives of people like Abraham and Moses.
2. All people fall short of God's standard of love because of the Fall and therefore, sin against God and others.
3. People are imperfect because of their sin and unacceptable to a perfect God.
4. God desires to have an intimate relationship with all people.

SESSION 1

Passage: Genesis 6:9-7:5, 8:13-22

Topic: Noah and the Ark

Summary: This is a famous story because of its familiarity, but there is a clear principle demonstrated in the story that will assist in preparing people to learn of and understand Jesus and His work for them. There are two key principles in the story of Noah. First, the payment for sin against God is death. The story of Noah is a very graphic depiction of this. Second, God's provides a way of escape from His judgment to those who trust in Him. Because of the sinfulness of mankind, God was forced to punish people and destroy them. Not because he wanted to, but because He is holy and righteousness and cannot overlook their sin. In the midst of that judgment, God offers a way of escape to Noah because of his faith in God.

Themes:

1. The consequence of sinning against God is death.
2. God provides a way of escape from His judgment to those who believe in Him.

SESSION 2

Passage: Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-6

Topic: Abraham

Summary: God's desire is to restore all people to Himself. During this phase of God's Larger Story, He chose to raise up the nation of Israel through Abraham and his descendants to show and tell the world who He is. He also promised that through Abraham's descendant He would save the world. This directly connects to that first promise that God gave to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. This affirms God's character as a promise keeper and it gives hope to what is to come.

As we study Abraham, we are also instructed in one of the main issues that God is looking for in us - the issue of faith. Abraham demonstrated faith in God and His promise to bring the Redeemer through his offspring. This is displayed when Abraham believed God's promise that his descendants would be as

numerous as the stars in the sky. One of those descendants would be the Redeemer. The result of his faith in God was that God gave Abraham a right-standing before Himself, total acceptance based on Abraham's belief in God's Word. Abraham didn't have all the answers and did not know how everything would work out, but he believed in the promise of God and that saved him. He understood that he could not work to attain what God promised, he had to simply believe in God's ability to provide.

Themes:

1. The promised Redeemer that God would send to save mankind would come through the family of Abraham.
2. Whoever would believe in this promised Redeemer would be saved.
3. God desires to have an intimate relationship with all people (this comes from the promise to Abraham that in him all families of the earth would be blessed).

SESSION 3

Passage: Genesis 22:1-14

Topic: Abraham and Isaac

Summary: This is a key biblical story for a number of reasons. The most significant principle in this story is the principle of substitutionary death. Abraham demonstrated faith in God and His promise when he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, through whom the Redeemer was promised to come. The key component of this story is how God responds to Abraham's faith by providing a ram to die in the place of Isaac. This story will be an example that you will remind them of when you teach them about Jesus.

Themes:

1. Belief in what God says about the Redeemer results in being restored to a relationship with God.
2. God provides a substitute to pay for the sins of people (Isaac deserved to die for his sin, yet God provided a ram as a replacement for Isaac).
3. People can respond to this substitute by believing it.

SESSION 4

Passage: Exodus 19-20

Topic: The establishment of the Law

Summary: Through a series of events over 400 years, Abraham's descendants grew to millions of people (the nation of Israel) and were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up a deliverer for His people (Moses) to lead Israel out of Egypt. As the Israelites moved toward the land that God promised to Abraham (The Promise Land), they began to act out against God, choosing a life of independence from Him. They desired the old land of Egypt over trusting God into the promised land. They failed to rest in God and His holiness for their lives. God instituted the Law for Israel to make a distinction between His people and the surrounding nations. The heart of this Law was love for both God and others. Consequently, over time, it showed the Israelites' lack of ability to love God and others according to God's design. It exposed their sin and their constant need to be pursuing Him.

Themes:

1. God provides pictures of the promised Redeemer throughout the Old Testament in the lives of people like Abraham and Moses.
2. All people fall short of God's standard of love because of the Fall and therefore, sin against God and others.
3. People are imperfect because of their sin and unacceptable to a perfect God.

CHAPTER 4 - JESUS

Review: Before you prepare new content to share with your friend, make sure to remind yourself of where you are at in the Larger Story of God. Take time to refer to the timeline so that you can provide a clear reference point for your friend, in order that they may better understand what you will be talking about.



SHORT TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: Matthew 1:1; Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 7:1-7, 11:37-44; John 3:16-17

Topic: Jesus' disciples and ministry

Summary: Abraham was the one that God chose in order to make a nation from his offspring. Recall one of the promises to Abraham: "In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Throughout Israel's history, God continued to reveal more information about the promised Redeemer. For example, roughly 1000 years after Abraham, David was born as a descendant of Abraham and became the second king of Israel. God promised David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel forever. Roughly 1000 years after David, Jesus was born as that promised descendant of David and Abraham.

Before going too much in depth into the life and ministry of Jesus, we are initially introduced to a group of men called the *Disciples*. Jesus modeled, through his time and interaction with his disciples, that pursuing God and what He's about is done best in a small community.

Through various stories, Jesus demonstrated his power and authority over all things in order to validate Himself as the Son of God and so that people would believe in Him. He also confronted the religious leaders who had grown to trust in their own righteous acts as the way to be restored to God.

Jesus made it very clear in John 3:16 that belief in the Son of God was God's only

requirement to be restored back into a relationship with God forever.

Themes:

1. Jesus was the descendant of Abraham and David who showed, by his great power, that He is the promised Redeemer and Son of God.
2. Jesus modeled that pursuing God and what He's about is done best in small community.
3. Jesus taught clearly that salvation has always been and always will be by faith in God and what He has said about the promised Redeemer.
4. God wants to restore people to their original intended purpose of having relationally intimacy with Him and people; that is only accomplished when we sacrifice our desires for what He has for us.

SESSION 2

Passage: John 14:1-6; Mark 15:1-16:8; Matthew 28:18-20

Topic: Jesus' death, resurrection, and commission

Summary: Jesus promised to come back for all those who believed in Him and take them to be with Him and His Father. Jesus makes an exclusive statement that He is the only way to the Father. Throughout the world, Satan has established various religions that promote different ways to be "saved." They are all counterfeit ways meant to steer people away from the Truth of how to have an intimate relationship with the one true God of all things. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the key works of Jesus that open up the way to having this intimate relationship with the Father.

For this reason, it is important to work through the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus and clearly connect it to the Old Testament stories that prepare the way for Jesus. Take the necessary time to remind your friend of the promise in the Garden of Eden, the ram that took the place of Isaac, and God's promise to Abraham to send one of his descendants to save mankind. Jesus is the culmination of all those promises and we need to believe in Jesus' sacrifice for us in order to be saved.

The commission paints a very clear picture of what our mission is as believers in Jesus: to make disciples of all people by following Jesus ourselves through reprioritizing our lives so we can have a deeper relationship with Him and so we can love others with the same love He has for us. This involves immersing ourselves and others into a deeper relationship with the Trinity, and teaching ourselves and others all that He has told us. God has always been about this

relational priority for people.

Themes:

1. Jesus is the only way to enter a relationship with God. This happens through belief in Him.
2. Jesus fulfills all the OT prophecies about the promised Redeemer and is the final sacrifice for all those who believe in Him. His death was the substitute in place of our own death for our sins against God.
3. Jesus invites us to participate with Him in His mission to restore all people to their original intended design of deep relational intimacy with God and other people. This puts the nature and character of God on display for others to experience.

LONG TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: Matthew 1:17, 18-25

Topic: Jesus is born

Summary: In Chapter 3 of this study, we learned that Abraham was the one that God chose in order to make a nation from his offspring. Recall one of the promises to Abraham: "In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Beginning with Genesis 3:15, and throughout Israel's history, God continued to reveal more information about the promised Redeemer. For example, roughly 1000 years after Abraham, David was born as a descendant of Abraham and became the second king of Israel. God promised David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel forever. Roughly 1000 years after David, Jesus was born as that promised descendant of David and Abraham and as the fulfillment of the promise made to Adam and Eve to deal with sins of people.

Themes:

1. God fulfilled all of his promises about the Redeemer in the person of Jesus who was the descendant of Abraham and David.
2. Jesus is God who came to live with people and fulfill the Genesis 3:15 promise to deal with the sins of all people.

SESSION 2

Passage: Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22

Topic: Jesus' disciples

Summary: Before going too much in depth into the life and ministry of Jesus, we are initially introduced to a group of men called the *Disciples*. They are a very key group of people in the biblical story of God restoring mankind to their original purpose of having relational with Him and with other people. The disciples collectively chose to leave everything and follow Jesus, and Jesus chose to teach and train them about living in God's Mission. Jesus modeled, through his time and interaction with his disciples, that pursuing God and what He's about is done best in a humble community of people that is pursuing Jesus together.

Themes:

1. Jesus modeled that pursuing God and what He's about is done best in a humble community that is pursuing Jesus together.
2. God wants to restore people to their original intended purpose of having relationally intimacy with Him and people; that is only accomplished when we sacrifice our desires for what He has for us.

SESSION 3

Passage: Luke 7:1-7, 11:37-44; John 3:16-17

Topic: Jesus' ministry

Summary: These couple of accounts about Jesus give a picture of what Jesus was primarily doing in His earthly ministry. He demonstrated his power and authority over all things in order to validate Himself as the Son of God and so that people would believe in Him. Jesus also wanted to make clear that God's salvation (how to be included in and live in God's Larger Story) had always been linked to the promise of the Redeemer that God instituted in the Garden of Eden.

Most of the religious leaders of Jesus' day had grown to trust in their own righteous acts as the way to be restored to God. Jesus strongly contradicted and opposed their thinking. Jesus made it clear that restoration was and will always be by faith alone in what God provided in the promised Redeemer; it can never be gained by our own righteous acts.

Themes:

1. Jesus showed by his great power that He is the promised Redeemer and Son of God.

2. Jesus taught clearly that salvation has always been and always will be by faith in what God provided in the promised Redeemer.

SESSION 4

Passage: John 14:1-6; Mark 15:1-16:8

Topic: Jesus' death and resurrection

Summary: Jesus promised to come back for all those who believed in Him and take them to be with Him and His Father. Jesus makes an exclusive statement that He is the only way to the Father. Throughout the world, Satan has established various systems of thinking that promote different ways to be "saved." They are all counterfeit ways meant to steer people away from the Truth of how to have an intimate relationship with the one true God of all things. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the key works of Jesus that open up the way to having this intimate relationship with the Father.

For this reason, it is important to work through the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus and clearly connect it to the Old Testament stories that prepare the way for Jesus. Take the necessary time to remind your friend of the promise in the Garden of Eden, the ram that took the place of Isaac, and God's promise to Abraham to send one of his descendants to save mankind. Jesus is the culmination of all those promises and we need to believe in Jesus' sacrifice for us in order to be saved.

Themes:

1. Jesus is the only way to enter a relationship with God. This happens through belief in Him.
2. Jesus fulfills all the OT prophecies about the promised Redeemer and is the final sacrifice for all those who believe in Him. His death was the substitute in place of our own death for our sins against God.

SESSION 5

Passage: Matthew 28:18-20

Topic: The Great Commission

Summary: The commission paints a very clear picture of what our mission is as believers in Jesus: to make disciples of all people by following Jesus ourselves through reprioritizing our lives so we can have a deeper relationship with Him and so we can love others with the same love He has for us. This involves immersing ourselves and others into a deeper relationship with the Trinity, and teaching ourselves and others all that He has told us. Jesus now reiterates the same

mission He gave to Adam and Eve, yet He gives it now to us through making disciples who love Jesus and others the way Jesus loves. God has always been about this relational priority for people.

Themes:

1. Jesus invites us to participate with Him in His mission to restore all people to their original intended design of deep relational intimacy with God and other people. This puts the nature and character of God on display for others to experience.

CHAPTER 5 - CHURCH

Review: Before you prepare new content to share with your friend, make sure to remind yourself of where you are at in the Larger Story of God. Take time to refer to the timeline so that you can provide a clear reference point for your friend, in order that they may better understand what you will be talking about.



SHORT TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: Acts 1:6-11, 2:1-13; Ephesians 2:17-22; Romans 6:5-14;

Topic: The birth and purpose of the Church

Summary: There is much confusion in our world today over the Church. Many have had some kind of experience with the Church (weddings, funerals, VBS, attendance as a kid with a family member, media, etc.) and have formed skewed understandings that are contrary to the Bible's definition and function of the Church. In a very basic sense, the Church exists to help believers in Jesus learn how to think and live in their new status as children of God, which includes deepening our relationship with Jesus by pursuing him together in a humble community.

The mission that Jesus gave to the disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 is reiterated in Acts 1. We now see how Jesus plans to work through the Church to accomplish His mission of restoring people into an intimate relationship with God and each other. With this in mind, the story of the birth of the Church is very important for the children of God to understand. The Spirit of God taking up residence in believers in Jesus is the key to living as children of God. As your friend begins to wrestle with what it means to be part of a humble community on mission for Jesus, they may realize that Jesus does not ask them to go it alone. Jesus sent His Spirit to indwell all believers to empower them to pursue Him and His mission together.

Not only has God accepted believers in Jesus into His family, but He has also freed them from their slavery to sin. Your friend must understand that sin always provokes a person through temptation to rebel against God, but for the believer, he is not bound to obey the temptation that sin is offering. They can offer themselves to God as a new creation and ask Him to help them live like the new creation that they are.

Themes:

1. Though many misunderstandings exist today, the Bible gives a clear picture of the beginning and purpose of the Church.
2. By the indwelling Spirit, Jesus empowers all believers with the capacity to pursue deep relational intimacy with God and with each other resulting in a radical different kind of life.
3. Because of our faith in Christ, although we didn't physically die, we were spiritually severed from our old slavemaster - sin (natural desire for independence from God) and now have a new master, Jesus.
4. Spiritual growth involves continual belief that God fully accepts us forever as His Children and that sin is no longer our master, and then continually offering ourselves to God as He sees and defines us.

SESSION 2

Passage: Colossians 1:15-18a; Ephesians 1: 13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Acts 2:42-47

Topic: The definition, culture, and leadership of the Church

Summary: The Church is defined by God as the Body of Christ where Jesus is the head or supreme leader of the Church. The Body metaphor is intentionally used by God to describe the aliveness quality of the Church and the multimember aspect of the Church with each member having a different function for the benefit of the whole Body. Similar to the human body, it also depicts that everyone is under one Head or Spiritual Director - Jesus.

Entrance into the Body of Christ, the Church, occurs when the Spirit takes up residence in the new believer at the point of belief. At that moment, the Holy Spirit fully places the new believer into the spiritual Body of Christ. Or in other words, the new believer is placed into the same position as Jesus in relationship to the Trinity. This is what has happened from the birth of the Church forward. There are three descriptors used to help understand the Church. There is the Universal Church: This refers to all believers who have believed, are believing, and will believe in Jesus. There is the Global Church: This refers to all believers

who are currently alive on the Earth right now. There is the Local Church: This refers to a collection of believers who choose to place themselves under a common leadership team. The local Church is to be the expression of Jesus.

God has given spiritual gifts to each local leadership team to be used to help the believers of that Church grow into loving one another in various ways that more and more reflect the sacrificial love that God has for people. There are two basic leadership positions defined by the Bible: Elder and Deacon. Elders have the responsibilities of feeding the Church the Truth from God's Word, protecting the Church from perversions of God's grace, and leading the Church into the sacrificial love life of Jesus. Deacons assist the elders in whatever ways necessary for the Elders to accomplish their responsibilities. Scripture teaches that *Pastor* is a gift given to the Church rather than a leadership position in the Church.

The end of Acts 2 displays a picture of the local Church in action. We see the function of the leaders in overseeing the Church. We see the members committing to participation in the local Church through learning and applying God's Word and spending quality and quantity time with each other. There is sacrificial giving to those in need and enjoying each other's company in their homes. As they were putting God's love on display in their families and neighborhoods, God worked through that to draw more people to Himself.

Themes:

1. The Church is the spiritual Body of Christ with Jesus as the Head.
2. Entrance in the spiritual Body of Christ occurs as belief through the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. God gives gifts to each local leadership team to be used to help believers grow into deeper relational intimacy with God and sacrificial love for each other.
4. When the Church is functioning according to God's design, God's love is put on display and He draws more people to Himself.

LONG TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: Acts 1:6-11, 2:1-13

Topic: The Holy Spirit comes and the Church is born

Summary: There is much confusion in our world today over the Church. Many have had some kind of experience with the Church (weddings, funerals, VBS, attendance as a kid with a family member, media, etc.) and have formed skewed understandings that are contrary to the Bible's definition and function of the Church. In a very basic sense, the Church exists to help believers in Jesus learn how to think and live in their new status as children of God, which includes deepening our relationship with Jesus by pursuing him together in a humble community.

The mission that Jesus gave to the disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 is reiterated in Acts 1. We now see how Jesus plans to work through the Church to accomplish His mission of restoring people into an intimate relationship with God and each other. With this in mind, the story of the birth of the Church is very important for the children of God to understand. The Spirit of God taking up residence in believers in Jesus is the key to living as children of God. As your friend begins to wrestle with what it means to be part of a humble community on mission for Jesus, they may realize that Jesus does not ask them to go it alone. Jesus sent His Spirit to indwell all believers to empower them to pursue Him and His mission together.

Themes:

1. Though many misunderstandings exist today, the Bible gives a clear picture of the beginning and purpose of the Church.
2. By the indwelling Spirit, Jesus empowers all believers with the capacity to pursue deep relational intimacy with God and with each other resulting in a radical different kind of life.

SESSION 2

Passage: Romans 6:5-14; Ephesians 2:17-22

Topic: Living together as God's ambassadors

Summary: Not only has God accepted believers in Jesus into His family, but He has also freed them from their slavery to sin. Your friend must understand that sin always provokes a person through temptation to rebel against God, but for the believer, he is not bound to obey the temptation that sin is offering. They can offer themselves to God as a new creation and ask Him to help them live like the new creation that they are. This conversational approach to God is a huge quality that all new believers can begin to develop. Not only is this a truth that applies to the individual, but it must be understood as a truth that applies to all

believers collectively. This should change how we view other people. Not only am I changed, but all my friends who believe in Jesus have been changed too. We are all in this together.

Themes:

1. Because of our faith in Christ, although we didn't physically die, we were spiritually severed from our old slavemaster - sin (natural desire for independence from God) and now have a new master, Jesus.
2. Spiritual growth involves continual belief that God fully accepts us forever as His Children and that sin is no longer our master, and then continually offering ourselves to God as He sees and defines us.

SESSION 3

Passage: Colossians 1:15-18a; Ephesians 1: 13-14

Topic: The definition of and entrance into the Church

Summary: The Church is defined by God as the Body of Christ where Jesus is the head or supreme leader of the Church. The Body metaphor is intentionally used by God to describe the aliveness quality of the Church and the multimember aspect of the Church with each member having a different function for the benefit of the whole Body. Similar to the human body, it also depicts that everyone is under one Head or Spiritual Director - Jesus.

Entrance into the Body of Christ, the Church, occurs when the Spirit takes up residence in the new believer at the point of belief. At that moment, the Holy Spirit fully places the new believer into the spiritual Body of Christ. Or in other words, the new believer is placed into the same position as Jesus in relationship to the Trinity. This is what has happened from the birth of the Church forward. There are three descriptors used to help understand the Church. There is the Universal Church: This refers to all believers who have believed, are believing, and will believe in Jesus. There is the Global Church: This refers to all believers who are currently alive on the Earth right now. There is the Local Church: This refers to a collection of believers who choose to place themselves under a common leadership team. The local Church is to be the expression of Jesus.

Themes:

1. The Church is the spiritual Body of Christ with Jesus as the Head.
2. Entrance in the spiritual Body of Christ occurs as belief through the work of the Holy Spirit.

SESSION 4

Passage: Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Topic: The leadership of the Church

Summary: God has given spiritual gifts to each local leadership team to be used to help the believers of that Church grow into loving one another in various ways that more and more reflect the sacrificial love that God has for people. There are two basic leadership positions defined by the Bible: Elder and Deacon. Elders have the responsibilities of feeding the Church the Truth from God's Word, protecting the Church from perversions of God's grace, and leading the Church into the sacrificial love life of Jesus. Deacons assist the elders in whatever ways necessary for the Elders to accomplish their responsibilities. Scripture teaches that *Pastor* is a gift given to the Church rather than a leadership position in the Church.

Themes:

1. God gives gifts to each local leadership team to be used to help believers grow into deeper relational intimacy with God and sacrificial love for each other.

SESSION 5

Passage: Acts 2:42-47

Topic: The culture of the local Church

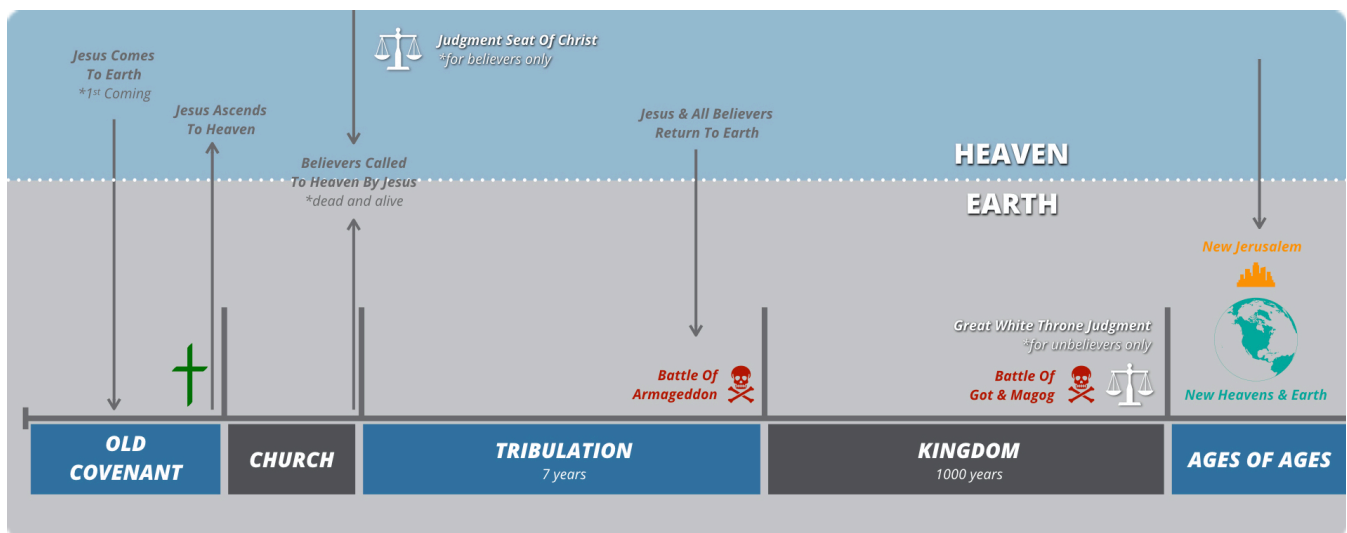
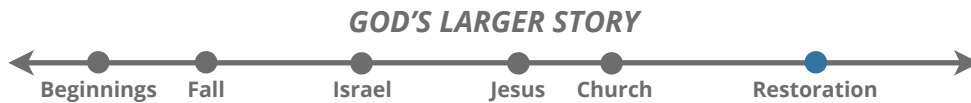
Summary: The end of Acts 2 displays a picture of the local Church in action. We see the function of the leaders in overseeing the Church. We see the members committing to participation in the local Church through learning and applying God's Word and spending quality and quantity time with each other. There is sacrificial giving to those in need and enjoying each other's company in their homes. As they were putting God's love on display in their families and neighborhoods, God worked through that to draw more people to Himself.

Themes:

1. When the Church is functioning according to God's design, God's love is put on display and He draws more people to Himself.

CHAPTER 6 - RESTORATION

Review: Before you prepare new content to share with your friend, make sure to remind yourself of where you are at in the Larger Story of God. Take time to refer to the timeline so that you can provide a clear reference point for your friend, in order that they may better understand what you will be talking about.



SHORT TRACK

Passage: 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 3:10-15, 2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 20-22

Topic: The Rapture, Judgment Seat of Jesus, and Eternal State

Summary: The verses in 1 Thessalonians give a clear picture of the time period directly before God judges the people of earth for their sin and rebellion against Him. The good news is that prior to any judgment, God promises to send Jesus to call the Church out (Rapture) from the earth. The bodies of all believers who have died and all those who are alive at that time will be called up into heaven with Jesus before the God's judgment begins. The bodiless souls of all believers who

died prior to this point were with Jesus in heaven. At the Rapture, the souls of all believers will be reunited with their newly resurrected bodies. For those believers physically alive at that time, their bodies will be instantaneously transformed into their eternal resurrected bodies.

The passages in Corinthians give us an explanation of the events in Heaven during the Tribulation period, where Jesus judges the faithful works of believers as a means for rewarding and assigning eternal work in the coming Kingdom period on earth.

Revelation 6-18 depict God's judgment on earth. The last three chapters of the Bible describe a culmination to God's great plan to restore all things. He brings a new heaven and earth and a new city of Jerusalem for us to live in. As was the plan from the very beginning of Creation, at this point, God Himself returns to the earth to live among people for all eternity. Everything and everyone will be the way that God intended them to be in perfect intimate relationship and dependence on Him and a deep commitment of relational love towards each other.

Themes:

1. Because of His justice, God is faithful to punish sin, and He is equally faithful to keep His promise of saving those who have believed in Him from that judgment.
2. God will judge the works of every believer, rewarding them by giving them eternal work and responsibility commensurate to our faithfulness on earth.
3. God fulfills His promise to restore all things to intended purpose. He will once and for all fill the entire new earth with His image through all of us restored image bearers. He will be with us and we will be with Him forever.

LONG TRACK

SESSION 1

Passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10

Topic: The Rapture and Judgment Seat of Jesus

Summary: The verses in 1 Thessalonians give a clear picture of the time period directly before God judges the people of earth for their sin and rebellion against Him. The good news is that prior to any judgment, God promises to send Jesus to call the Church out (Rapture) from the earth. The bodies of all believers who have died and all those who are alive at that time will be called up into heaven with Jesus before the God's judgment begins. The bodiless souls of all believers who died prior to this point were with Jesus in heaven. At the Rapture, the souls of all believers will be reunited with their newly resurrected bodies. For those believers physically alive at that time, their bodies will be instantaneously transformed into their eternal resurrected bodies.

The passages in Corinthians give us an explanation of the events in Heaven during the Tribulation period, where Jesus judges the faithful works of believers as a means for rewarding and assigning eternal work in the coming Kingdom period on earth.

Themes:

1. Because of His justice, God is faithful to punish sin, and He is equally faithful to keep His promise of saving those who have believed in Him from that judgment.
2. God will judge the works of every believer, rewarding them by giving them eternal work and responsibility commensurate to our faithfulness on earth.

SESSION 2

Passage: Revelation 20-22

Topic: The Kingdom and Eternal State

Summary: Revelation 6-18 depict God's judgment on earth. The last three chapters of the Bible describe a culmination to God's great plan to restore all things. He brings a new heaven and earth and a new city of Jerusalem for us to live in. As was the plan from the very beginning of Creation, at this point, God Himself returns to the earth to live among people for all eternity. Everything and everyone will be the way that God intended them to be in perfect intimate relationship and dependence on Him and a deep commitment of relational love towards each other.

Themes: 1. God fulfills His promise to restore all things to intended purpose. He will once and for all fill the entire new earth with His image through all of us restored image bearers. He will be with us and we will be with Him forever.

