

## **The Story**

### **Introduction – Week of April 16<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Note:**

- There will be an optional training for all teachers and leaders participating in The Story on Tuesday, April 11 from 6:30 – 7:30 PM in the Uphaus Worship Center.
    - o Pastor Todd will meet with everyone from 6:30-7:00 to discuss The Story curriculum and process.
    - o From 7:00-7:30, you will be able to go to your classrooms to make sure that your AV equipment is working.
      - Two members of our AV team will be available to answer questions for you. If the lead teacher is not available for the training, it would be ideal if another leader or a class member can be on hand to make sure they are comfortable with the equipment.
      - New TVs and DVD players have been installed in many of our rooms. Because of this, some dry erase board and/or bulletin boards have had to be relocated.
        - Please let Julie Burch (groups @collegechurch.com) know what these changes mean for your group and classroom needs. If we need to purchase and install additional boards, we can.
  - On April 16 and 23, Samuel Keller will be available to go to classrooms to trouble shoot AV problems that may come up. You will simply need to text Samuel at 309-200-5168.
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#### **Lesson Overview**

In this lesson, the teacher will explain The Story group process and lead the class in understanding our need for God's Word, Bible reading & study, while painting a picture of hope for the future of College Church as we journey through God's Word together.

#### **Lesson Expected Learning Outcome**

Each group member will understand how to engage in The Story group process and readings. They will understand the resources that are available to them and our need for God's Word. They will receive hope for their groups members and church on this 30+ week journey.

#### **Lesson Features:**

This lesson has three features:

- o Discussion – I Spy with My Little Eye
- o Directions – As We Begin the Story
- o Lesson – 8 Things the Bible Says About the Bible

#### **Discussion – I Spy With My Little Eye**

When many of us were children, we played a simple game called "I Spy". Perhaps you also played this game with your children or grandchildren. The object of the game, as you

remember, is for one player to spot an item *with their little eye*, that the other players will take turns guessing.

- With this in mind, as we begin The Story together for the next 3+ weeks, what HOPE do you spy with your little *internal* eye? In other words, as College Church walks through the Bible together in kids ministry, youth ministry, college-age ministry, and adult ministries, what do you anticipate the benefits will be? Where's the hope? Why do you say this?
  - Next, The Story is broken up into 5 different portions: the Story of the Garden (Genesis 1 - 11), the Story of Israel (Genesis 12 – Malachi), the Story of Jesus (Matthew – the Gospel of John), the Story of the Church (Acts – Jude), and the Story of a New Garden (Revelation). As you consider these 5 portions, which portion are you the most excited to study together as a group? Yes, every portion will be exciting and meaningful, but as you think of it now, which portion of The Story are you the anticipating the most? Why?
  - The Story tells the narrative of the Bible as one continuous story. Have you ever read the Bible chronologically? If so, what was that experience like? If not, what excites you about this method of Bible study?
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### **Directions – As We Begin The Story**

As we begin The Story next week, there are a few things that we will need to keep in mind:

#### **1. The Flow**

- Pastor Kevin will start things off each week as he preaches some story or feature of the weekly readings.
- Group members will read the chapter and scripture portions throughout the week and come ready to discuss the questions in the Study Guide when their group meets.
- Each group will cover the information listed as *Group Time* during the regular meeting time as well as show a portion of The Story DVD.

#### **2. The Resources**

- After Easter, The Story resources are available at Guest Central in Vanderpool Lobby *while supplies last*. The Story experience includes the following resources:
  - For Adults
    - NIV, The Story, Hardcover, Comfort Print: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People
    - The Story Bible Study Guide: Getting to the Heart of God's Story
  - For Teens
    - The Story, Student Edition, Paperback, Comfort Print: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People
  - For Kids
    - The Story for Kids: Discover the Bible from Beginning to End
  - For Birth-Kindergarten

- The Story of Little Ones: Discover the Bible in Pictures

### 3. The Lower Story and the Upper Story

- As we journey through The Story in the days and weeks ahead, we will learn that heaven and earth are woven more closely together than we ever dreamed. All through the story of the Bible we see two parallel and beautiful dramas. Each week as our groups studies The Story, we will explore:
    - The Lower Story – Humans live on earth and see things from a horizontal perspective. We can't see what is around the bend but must make a decision on which way to go, where we will live, and how we will respond to what happens to us. We focus on getting through the day as best we can. We interpret why we think other people do what they do. We struggle to know why certain things happen and why others things don't happen.
    - The Upper Story – This is how the story is unfolding from God's perspective – from above. Heaven is breaking into our world more than we recognize, and the story of God's seeking love, perpetual grace, and longing for relationship with ordinary people is breathtaking.
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## **Lesson – 8 Things the Bible Says About the Bible**

Before we begin The Story next week, let's see what the Bible says about the Bible. As you hear the following truths about God's Word, ask yourself, "How can this type of emphasis on God's Word help our church over the next 30+ weeks?" We'll review this question at the end of the lesson.

### **1. The Bible Is Inspired.**

First and foremost, inspiration has to do with the fact that the Bible's ultimate author is God.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. ([2 Tim. 3:16–17](#))

The entirety of the Bible is "God-breathed"—*exhaled* from God. No wonder it's commonly referred to as God's Word.

If God authored it, though, then what were Moses and David and Paul and John and all the rest doing? Weren't they writing Holy Scripture, too? Exactly. The Bible was written by God *through* humans. The apostle Peter explains it this way:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. ([2 Pet. 1:20–21](#))

In other words, God made sure the human authors wrote exactly what he wanted them to write—no more, no less.

These authors weren't passive robots, however. God didn't erase their personalities or commandeer their minds. They wrote as thinking, feeling human beings. God worked through their unique personalities, educations, backgrounds, and experiences to enable—to *inspire*—them to write divine truth.

## **2. The Bible Is True.**

God's Word is true because God's character is true. He is not a liar; the God of truth cannot speak false words. To doubt the truthfulness of God's Word is to doubt the truthfulness of God himself.

Some people think that while the Bible's "spiritual" concepts are true enough, much of the other content (say, historical or geographical details) probably isn't. But this assumption is false, for Scripture doesn't make "any restriction on the kinds of subjects to which it speaks truthfully." Besides, if the Bible isn't fully reliable at every point, how can we be certain it's fully reliable at any point?

Looking to Scripture itself, we find numerous claims to pervasive truthfulness (e.g., [Pss. 12:6; 19:7–9; 119:160](#); [Prov. 30:5–6](#); [John 10:35; 17:17](#)). Every word is described as flawless ([Ps. 12:6](#); [Prov. 30:5](#)), eternal ([Ps. 119:89](#); [Isa. 40:8](#); [Matt. 24:35](#)), unbreakable ([John 10:35](#)), boundless in perfection ([Ps. 119:96](#)), and completely reliable ([2 Pet. 1:19](#)). Jesus affirmed it concisely: "[God's] word is truth" ([John 17:17](#)). Scripture's truthfulness is so comprehensively assumed, in fact, that entire arguments can hinge on appeals to a single word ([Matt. 22:45](#)), the number of a noun ([Gal. 3:16](#)), even the tense of a verb ([Matt. 22:32](#)).

When properly interpreted, the Bible will never mislead you. What it says, God says.

## **3. The Bible Is Authoritative.**

God owns the universe he verbalized into existence. And his loving authority, intended for our good, is exercised through his Word. In fact, God has so identified himself with Scripture that to disbelieve or disobey *it* is to disbelieve or disobey *him*.

True, the Bible isn't the only authority. There are other rightful authorities, such as parents ([Eph. 6:1–2](#)), pastors ([Heb. 13:17](#); [1 Pet. 5:5](#)), and government officials ([Rom. 13:1–7](#); [1 Pet. 2:13–14](#)). None, however, is above God's Word. This means the correctness of every belief, value, opinion, statement, and sermon is finally settled by the question: what does the Bible say? Jesus himself appealed "to each part of Scripture, and to each element of Scripture, as to an unimpeachable authority."

Kings don't give advice; they give orders. Obedience to the Word of God, therefore, is not optional. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves," the apostle James writes. "Do what it says" ([James 1:22](#)).

As countercultural and counterintuitive as it may feel, submission to God's Word is where true life and freedom are found.

#### **4. The Bible Is Clear.**

The Bible is an ancient document. It can feel foreign. Some parts are confusing ([2 Pet. 3:16](#)). Nevertheless, the Bible is clear enough. As the psalmist says, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130). God commands parents to teach the Bible to their children ([Deut. 6:6–7](#)).

Sometimes Scripture is difficult to understand because it's talking about complicated things. Often, however, it's hard to grasp because we simply don't like what it says. As Mark Twain famously quipped, "It ain't those parts of the Bible I can't understand that bother me; it's the parts I do understand." Often it's not that the Bible is unclear, but that we're unreceptive.

#### **5. The Bible Is Sufficient.**

Scripture contains all the words from God that we need in order to know him truly, trust him fully, obey him perfectly, and enjoy him abundantly. Peter says God has given us "*everything* we need for a godly life" through the knowledge available in the Scriptures ([2 Pet. 1:3](#)). Likewise, Paul says, the Bible is so complete that through it we can be "thoroughly equipped for every good work"—"thoroughly" and "every," not "partly" and "most" ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)). It doesn't get more comprehensive.

While the Bible may not tell us everything we want to know, it does tell us everything we need to know. Its truth isn't exhaustive, but it is enough ([Deut. 29:29](#); [Prov. 25:2](#)). It

contains all we need to know in order to be saved ([2 Tim. 3:15](#); [James 1:18, 21](#); [1 Pet. 1:23](#)) and to obey God in faith ([2 Tim. 3:16](#); [2 Pet. 1:3–4](#)). No wonder severe warnings accompany adding to or removing any of its words ([Deut. 4:2, 12:32](#); [Prov. 30:5–6](#)).

## 6. The Bible Is Powerful.

Since the Bible's ultimate author is God, it is a book of unparalleled power. Its words are strong enough to melt hearts ([Jer. 23:29](#)) and change lives ([John 17:17](#); cf. [Rom. 1:16](#); [1 Thess 1:4–5](#)). The book of Hebrews states:

The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ([Heb. 4:12](#))

Saying the Bible is powerful is another way of saying it's *effective*. The Holy Spirit uses it to accomplish his plans ([Isa. 55:10–11](#)). The book is an instrument of action in God's all-powerful hand.

It is crucial to realize that God intends his Word not simply to engage our minds, but also to change our hearts. As one person put it, "The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity; it was written to transform your life."

## 7. The Bible Is Christ-Centered.

Contrary to popular belief, the Bible is not simply a collection of ethical principles, moral platitudes, or abstract life lessons. It is a thrilling story.

And the story is not ultimately about you and me. In [Luke 24](#), the resurrected Savior appears to two followers on the road to Emmaus. Luke recounts what happened:

[Jesus] said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ([Luke 24:25–27](#))

Later, after appearing to his 11 disciples, Jesus says to them:

"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ([Luke 24:44–45](#))

It wasn't just after his resurrection that Jesus spoke this way, however. During his earthly ministry he explained to the "Bible experts" of the day his central place in the great story:

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. . . . If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ([John 5:39–40, 46](#))

From beginning to end—Genesis to Revelation—the plotline of Scripture anticipates, spotlights, and finds its ultimate resolution in God's redeeming Son. And perhaps the most stunning thing about this story is that the central character loves us back.

## 8. The Bible Is Precious.

The Bible is the most valuable treasure in the universe. It's our food ([Jer. 15:16](#)), our life ([Deut. 32:46–47](#)), our comfort ([Ps. 119:50](#)), our strength ([Ps. 119:28](#)), our guidance ([Ps. 119:105](#)), our desire ([Ps. 119:20](#)), our hope ([Ps. 130:5](#)), our love ([Ps. 119:97](#)), our joy ([John 15:11](#)), and our treasure ([Ps. 119:72](#)).

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. ([Rom. 15:4](#))

*Everything.* Paul is going so far as to claim the entirety of the Old Testament was written for you—to instruct you, to encourage you, to help you endure, and to flood your heart with hope.

And while we must avoid "bibliolatry"—treasuring Scripture more than its Author—it's striking to note how inseparably connected God's Word is with God himself ([Ps. 56:4; 119:48](#)). Indeed, to abandon it is to abandon him. Until Jesus returns and our faith becomes sight, we must live in the "age of the ear." "For now," Augustine said, "treat the Scripture of God as the face of God. Melt in its presence." Or as one great preacher remarked, "To me the Bible is not God, but it is God's voice, and I do not hear it without awe."

The Bible is a bottomless treasure chest of beauty and wonder. It claims to be inspired, true, authoritative, clear, sufficient, powerful, Christ-centered, and precious. May God help us to treat it as such.

Smethurst, Matt. July 29, 2020. *8 Things Your Bible Says About Itself*. [Thegospelcoalition.com](http://Thegospelcoalition.com).

### Closing Discussion and Reminder:

- Let's revisit the question that I asked you to consider: How can this type of emphasis on God's Word help our church over the next 30+ weeks? Why do you say this?
- Remind your class to read chapter 1 before next week's group time.