



These Things Are Written

**THE STORY OF GOD
AND HIS PEOPLE**



A 26 SESSION
STUDY OF THE BIBLE

student guide

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Session 1: Introduction

Prayer

Almighty God, You have provided us with Your holy Word; bless our time of study, that the mysteries that You have hidden therein would be made clear to our eyes. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Narrative

The size of the Bible alone can be intimidating. For many the thought of attempting to grasp its contents seems like jumping into a lake when they do not know the depth. They are afraid that they will be overwhelmed quickly in the Scriptural waters. Often, therefore, they do not jump in at all. And that is tragic. This is not just a book that has shaped every corner of western culture. It is more importantly God's own telling of His interaction with this world and all of us who live within it. It is the story of His great love shown to those who rebel against Him.

It is true that the Bible is filled with more than enough words and wisdom to occupy one for a lifetime. However, that does not mean one should be afraid to jump in and begin to read, listen and learn. Understanding the basic story that God reveals in the Scriptures is key to understanding all of the specific words and wisdom contained in it. Even more important to grasping this truth is understanding what or who the whole story is really about.

The Bible itself is not arranged as one constant story with each book picking up the story right where the last book left off. This is because God used many different people in many different periods of history to record what had occurred in the past, what was occurring right when they lived, or what would happen in the future. And that means that while certain parts of the Bible flow together from book to book as a flowing narrative, it is not always that way. For not only did God employ different people to record this history, those people also used different ways of communicating. The Spirit inspired some to write in a way that simply recounted what had happened in a rather straightforward way. Others wrote in poetry. Still others recorded prophecies and revelations given to them.

The Scriptures are therefore as diverse as God's creation itself. We find the proclamations of kings and the dreams of old men. We find the harsh words given to the prophets and the sweet writings of poets reflecting

on God's mercy. We read words of sage wisdom and eyewitness accounts of the Savior's life and teaching. God has in His Word employed every means to record for us His interaction with humanity throughout all time. This glorious story is threaded throughout each book in every style of writing.

Yes, despite the Scriptures' grand variety, the basic story of God's interaction with humanity comes through quite clearly. God creates only to find His precious work destroyed. It is the story of the way He sets out to make right all that has gone so terribly wrong. It is the account of how God leaves heaven in order to make all things new again.

This grand story is comprised of many other smaller stories. And each of those stories is intriguingly filled with people rich in diversity. We read about the real lives of real people in all sorts of times and situations. And yet, each of these smaller stories first and foremost is a story about God's grand story. It is about God redeeming that which is lost. It is about Him making all things new. It is about Him saving those who could not save themselves.

Most of these stories could stand on their own and yet none of them do. And at the center of all of those stories stands one which makes all of the others make sense. None of the Bible can be fully understood apart from this key story. The story of God Himself in the flesh, dying and rising to give to humanity eternal life is what brings all of the other stories together.

Each part of the Scriptures leads us through part of God's interaction between Himself and humanity. Many of these stories you will already know. But watch for the grand narrative being told. Watch how everything leads toward the center and away from it. Behold how God is saving that which is lost.

By the end of this study you will not have drowned in all the depth of the Scriptures. That is not the intention of this study. You will have waded in only so far. God willing, you will have waded in far enough to give you the confidence to wade deeper into the rest of the words and wisdom in the Bible. You will know the basic flow of the Scriptures and its center which is Jesus. And with that you will be ready for a lifetime of hearing, studying, and reflecting upon the Scriptures.

Prepare to be awestruck by God's absolute persistence in bringing humanity back into a right relationship with Himself. Prepare to be amazed by the absolute lengths to which He went to make all things new. He makes new what sin and rebellion had made so fragile and old. Prepare to behold the One whose work has brought to all humanity salvation and life.

Bible Study

1. What is the Bible?

2. What is the purpose of the Bible?

3. What makes the Bible different from other books you may read or hear about?

4. Who wrote the Bible?

5. What makes the Bible relevant to everyday life?

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6. How many Bibles do you have in your home?

7. Are they all the same? What makes one different from the others?

8. How much of the Bible have you read? What has prevented you from reading more?

9. How is the Bible organized? What divisions make it easy to find specific parts of the Bible?

10. What is the purpose of the Old Testament? (Luke 24:27)

11. What is the purpose of the New Testament? (John 20:31)

12. Who is at the center of everything the Scriptures teach? (Ephesians 2:19-21)

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Concluding Statement

While the Bible is very diverse in many ways, it is simple in its purpose: to lead us to know Jesus and have salvation. Whenever we open it, we should pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal Jesus to us.

Hymn

(Tune: St. Flavian CM)

Almighty God, your Word is cast
Like seed into the ground;
Now let the dew of heav'n descend
And righteous fruits abound.

Let not the sly satanic foe
This holy seed remove,
But give it root in ev'ry heart
To bring forth fruits of love.

Let not the world's deceitful cares
The rising plant destroy,
But let it yield a hundredfold
The fruits of peace and joy.

So when the precious seed is sown,
Life-giving grace bestow
That all whose souls the truth receive
Its saving pow'r may know.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, your Son is the Word made flesh; help us always to see Him as the center of your Word, that He may also be the center of our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

For Next Week

Review Genesis 1—11.

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Session 2: Genesis 1—11

Prayer

Lord God, by Your almighty Word, You created all things; help us to see the power of Your Word in our lives today, as it is the way that leads to salvation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Narrative

A young boy slaves all morning placing one block upon another in order to turn the imagination of his mind into a concrete reality. When the final block is placed, he steps back and marvels at what he has created. Moments later, his brother's sizable foot comes sweeping through the air and destroys his beloved creation. Pieces fly here and there. Tears running down the boy's face, he decides that this act of destruction will not be the end of the story. He will put everything back in its proper place. And yet, with every step he takes towards this goal, his brother again swings his fierce foot. The creator, though, will not yield to this violence. He will in the end recreate what has been lost.

This is the story of the entire Scriptures. The story of the Scriptures is that of God refusing to yield to the violence of sin. It is the story of Him ensuring that in the end all things would be set right, that in the end everything would be made new. This is the story of the entire Scriptures and it is also the story of Genesis 1—11.

In the beginning, God creates everything in perfection. With His strong Word He calls forth into reality every imagination of His mind. He speaks and light shines forth into the darkness. He speaks again and the heavens break forth in the midst of the watery mass. Next dry land is called out of those same waters. The seemingly lifeless land then pushes forth at God's decree every type of vegetation. Grass sprouts. Trees begin to climb to the sky. Flowers prepare to cover the earth with every magnificent color. Above the now active soil of the earth appear two lights, one for the day and another for the night. The surrounding sky is filled with bright starry companions for these two great lights. The waters below the heavens, once empty, start to move as tiny fish dart around and great sea creatures glide from one place to another. And as life thrives there in the sea, it also appears in the heavens above. Birds soar from one place to another. And as those

birds gaze down upon the earth the next day, they see the dry land kicked up underneath the feet of every imaginable large beast and tiny insect.

And then God reveals what all of this creating has really been about. He reveals the end of all of it. He dips his finger in the dust of the earth and brings forth man. He takes one of man's ribs and crafts woman. Creation ends with man and woman standing upright and being given two tasks. They are to exercise dominion over all that has been made. And they are also given the task of filling the earth with little feet. God steps back and marvels. As He rests, the seventh day is made holy. "Good. Very good indeed," He says of His six days of work.

But all too soon His joy is cut short as the most crafty of all of His creatures is filled with the deceptions of a fallen angel. The devil's lies spew forth and find their home in the ears and hearts of the man and woman God had created. Deceived, they doubt the very same Word that called them into existence. They seek to leave behind their role as creation and seize God's place as creator.

In a moment, all of creation feels the sweeping force of sin. Nakedness becomes evident. Pain and toil become stark realities. Death creeps into every last corner of creation. God mourns the perfection lost but will not yield to this violence. He promises to set all things right. He puts into motion His plan of salvation that rests upon a sacred seed of the frail woman destroying the wily evil one.

Into all of this death comes new life. The woman gives birth to a son and then another. However, the hope inherent in these new children is quickly dismissed. One brother kills another and again death reigns. Sin and its wages of death rule the day as each generation passes. But God will not yield. He continues to act.

Disgusted by all the evil His eyes behold, God unleashes floods of water from above and below over the whole earth in order to destroy everything that has ruined his perfect creation. He closes eight humans and a pair of each kind of animal safely in a tar-pitched ark. Through these whirling waters, He brings them through death unto new life. He places a bow of many colors into the sky as a reoccurring reminder of His unending grace.

But the spread of sin and death will not yet yield even to this grand attack. The pride that had once inspired the devil to rebel again finds its home in the hearts of humanity. They decide that they will make their name great, not by honoring the holy name of the creator, but by erecting a tower in their own name and for their honor. Again, creatures seek to be regarded as the creator. The result is not what they suppose. Confusion and isolation are built in place of their tall tower. God will not be confounded. His promise of restoration through the seed of a woman rides every storm of sin and continues on unabated. Soon God will begin to show just where within the great sea of humanity that child will be born.

Bible Study

1. Where would you expect any book to begin?

2. The occupants of our world have always been intrigued about the origins of the planet and of humanity. What is the most popular of the theories in this regard among unbelievers? How are those questions answered here in the book of Genesis? (Genesis 1:1)

3. What power does God use to create all things? (Genesis 1:3)

4. Christians have always given God the Father primary credit for creation. But are the other persons of the Trinity present and active in creation? How? (Genesis 1:1-3)

5. How does God describe His creation? (Genesis 1:25) What adverb does he add to that description after creating man and woman? (Genesis 1:31)

6. What series of events caused creation to go from very good to very bad? (Genesis 3)

7. What are the consequences of sin for the serpent, the man, and the woman? (Genesis 3:14-19)

8. What does God promise right in the midst of His proclamations about the consequences of sin? (Genesis 3:15)

9. What are some biblical examples of sin reigning after the fall into sin? (Genesis 4-5)

10. How is Noah described? (Genesis 6:9)

11. What was the purpose of the flood? Why did God desire such things? (Genesis 6:17)

12. Who was saved even as the rest of the world was drowned? (Genesis 6:18-19)

13. What were those who were saved in the ark to do once the waters receded? (Genesis 9:1)

14. What promise does God make to them and what is the seal of that promise? (Genesis 9:11-13)

15. What desire causes the sin present in the building of the Tower of Babel? (Genesis 11:4)
What was God's response to such sin? (Genesis 11:7)

Concluding Statement

God creates and man destroys. It is the vicious cycle that repeats itself time and time again in the Scriptures. And yet, God will set all things right. He will send a Child who will crush the head of the serpent who sought to destroy all that God had called good.

Hymn

(Tune: St. Crispin LM)

God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in Him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

Christ Jesus is the Ground of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death;
All that confide in him alone
Are built on this chief Cornerstone.

God would not have the sinner die,
His Son with saving grace is nigh,
His Spirit in the Word doth teach
How man the blessed goal may reach.

Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives all sins which you have done;
And, justified by Jesus' blood,
Your Baptism grants the highest good.

If you are sick, if death is near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death,
That is the firmest ground of faith.

Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To you, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

Prayer

Lord God, You are the Father of all people; lead us to serve and obey You as obedient children, that all people may know the glory of Your name. In Jesus' name. Amen.

For Next Week

Review Genesis 12–50.