



DAY 1

THE STORY OF GOD & THE STORY OF US

“Telling stories is as basic to human beings as eating. More so, in fact, for while food makes us live, stories are what make our lives worth living. They are what makes our condition human.”

— Richard Kearney, *On Stories*

Every child loves to hear the magical words “once upon a time.” Those four little words transport us to other times and places, to worlds of adventure and valor, to epic contests between heroes and villains. The stories we begin to hear and tell from the time we are young children give shape to our sense of right and wrong. We long to become the virtuous hero, the brave prince or princess who defeats the dragon and restores order to the kingdom. These stories begin to form our understanding of who we are and who we want to become.

Human beings are relentless storytellers because we are made to live our lives by finding our place in some larger story. Every religion, every philosophy, or every worldview is essentially a story that shapes the lives of the people who embrace it—a way of looking at the world and living in that world. Regardless of what form they take, these big “worldview stories” all basically set out to answer questions like these:

- What does it mean to be human?
- How did we get here?
- Why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?
- What do we do about it?
- Is there any hope for the future?

Whether a person places their faith in an ancient religion like Hinduism or embraces a confidence in modern science to explain reality, each “worldview story” provides its own unique answers to these questions in such a way that shapes the lives of those who take that story as their own. The basic quest of every human heart is to find the story that makes the most sense of the world we find ourselves living in.

First and foremost Christianity isn’t a set of beliefs to affirm or a list of rules to obey. It’s a story to embrace and live into. It’s the story of God and the story of us. It’s the story of God cre-

ating us, and everything else that exists, out of his great love. It's the story of how we rebelled and continue to rebel against God because of our seemingly insatiable desire to have things our own way. It's the story of a God who loves us and the world he made so much that he refused to leave us to our own self-inflicted ruin but instead undertook an epic rescue mission at great cost to himself. It's the story of how he now enlists us in that great rescue mission in the world while we wait for the day when the story reaches ultimate conclusion and we truly do live "happily ever after." Christians are those who believe that this story isn't just a fairytale that's too good to be true but, rather, that it is the truest story we can find.

This grand story finds its center, focus, and climax in Jesus, the son of God, who came to give his life and to conquer death as the means to accomplish God's mission to rescue and renew all that was lost and broken. The Gospel of John captures the central plot line of the story in this way:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. JOHN 3:16-17

A lot of people imagine God as though he sits in judgment over the world, watching for us to do wrong so that he can exact his divine retribution. But the story of the Bible isn't so much about retribution as it is about restoration. As these verses make clear, Jesus came into the world not to condemn but to rescue. He came to show us the love of God that's greater than we could ever dare to imagine.

The Bible not only tells us this story but also invites us to join the story. Jesus called his first followers to carry on his work in the world, making known the love of God through word and deed. All these centuries later, that same call goes out to us.

In the days ahead we'll be exploring this story in greater depth and talking about what it looks like to live in light of that story in our everyday lives. Our hope and prayer is that through the next few weeks of Foundation you will come to understand, believe, and live into that story like never before. Spend a few minutes reflecting on and responding to what you have read today.

In a few words or phrases write down below what you learned today, something that you would like to remember, or a way that God is leading you. There is no right or wrong answer, just space for you to process with God.

Today I learned...

REFLECT & RESPOND

How does seeing Christianity as a story to embrace rather than a set of rules to obey impact your view of God?

How do you feel about God inviting you to join his story?

As you begin your Foundation experience, use the space below to journal what most excites you or makes you nervous about this nine week journey you have begun. Then, spend a few minutes talking to God about what you journaled.