

Walking Through
HISTORY

A GUIDE TO DISCOVER GOD'S REDEMPITIVE PLAN FROM BEGINNING TO END



GRAB THE BIBLE
READING PLAN

Introduction

KIDS ENJOY PUZZLES. There's an anticipation of putting the last piece in place and finally getting a glimpse of the completed masterpiece. When put together, individual shapes and a range of colors and patterns form a beautiful display of the artist's intended design — one that's complete and unified.

The same could be said of the Bible. From beginning to end, the Bible is filled with intricate storylines, beautiful poetry, historical references, masterful details and intentional patterns and themes, all pieced together to form one larger story — His Story.

But why does it matter that we know His Story from beginning to end? What's the point of reading through all 66 books of the Bible in community or listening to someone expound on this story through a Sunday sermon? It's because the more we know and understand His Story, the more we know and understand our own. We were created by a powerful God, designed for a loving relationship with Him. We were made to live out a life of purpose reflecting His character and an ability to create with an intentionality like His.

This year, as we read through the entire Bible together and as our pastors teach through the Bible on Sundays, use this guide along the way to orient yourself to its overarching story and how your story finds its place in His.

NOTEWORTHY TIPS:

- Don't miss the "As You Study..." prompts! These will help you dive deeper in your study and point to larger themes and patterns.
- Expect God to give you wisdom as you read and joy as you spend time in His Word!
- Invest in a fresh notebook and use it for the entire year as you take notes while you read.
- Write down any questions you may have along the way and share them during your small group.
- Use the blank pages in the back of this booklet to keep track of sermon notes and references for further study.

Creation

THE BEGINNING. That's where humanity's story kicks off. In the beginning, the earth was formless, empty and dark (Genesis 1:2). But for God, His story always was. He has no beginning and no end! Over the course of 6 days, God spoke into that formless, empty void and life sprang forth! He formed the earth by creating land, seas and sky. He filled the earth with creatures: fish, birds and other wild animals. He brought light into the world and created morning and evening.

Then on the sixth day, God did something special. He created humanity — male and female. More unique than the rest of creation, mankind was created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). In fact, they were created to reflect His image to the world. He blessed them and placed them in the Garden of Eden to be His representatives on the earth, not as slaves, but as rulers. In doing so, He provided for them, commissioned them to rule over His creation and commanded them to multiply. He invited them into a life of purpose and love through relationship with Him.

On the seventh day, God rested. This rest wasn't a result of exhaustion, rather, a product of His love and admiration for His creation. This story begins with

God, His kingdom and His royal priesthood (man) dwelling together in His holy temple (Eden). A loving partnership with creation was always God's desire.

There was one commandment that they had to obey. God told Adam that they were free to eat from any of the trees in the garden, except for one. They could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they did, God warned that they would die (Genesis 2:16). But what happens when God's desires and man's desires don't align?

AS YOU STUDY...

- What word(s) are repeated in Genesis 1 & 2?
- Why is it significant that we are created in God's image? How does this change your view of yourself? Of others?
- You were created with purpose and in love. What does it look like to live out the purpose God has called you to?
- What have you learned about God's character?

The Fall

THE BEGINNING OF REBELLION. In the third chapter of Genesis, a new character emerged in the story— a talking snake. The Bible said that this serpent was more crafty than any other animal God had made (Genesis 3:1). So in his guile, he planted a seed of doubt in Eve's mind by asking a question, "Did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" Eve responds by adding to what God said, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent persisted and told Eve that she wouldn't die, instead, her eyes would be opened to good and evil, just like God.

At that moment, Adam and Eve were each faced with a decision. Would Eve trust in God's goodness and wisdom he had shared with her and Adam or would she give in to mistrust and grasp for wisdom on her own terms? Would Adam intervene in the situation and present the truth of God to Eve, or would he look on passively and sacrifice Eve's safety to pursue His own desires?

Adam and Eve both failed the test and ate the fruit.

As a result of their mistrust in God's goodness and their disobedience, sin tainted God's good creation. For the first time ever, Adam and Eve felt shame and hid from God. A loving partnership with His creation was always God's desire. However, Adam and Eve's desires resulted in spiritual death — separation from a loving God.

Because of their sin, God banished them from the Garden. They were removed from God's presence and prohibited from returning. Moving forward, life would be harder for Adam and Eve and their offspring. Relationships, childbearing and work would all suffer under the weight of sin. The world God made would no longer function as He intended. Sin would contaminate every part of life, leaving it condemned and tarnished.

But even in the midst of darkness and despair, hope remained. God also cursed the serpent and foreshadowed a time when a descendant of Eve would crush his head. This good news revealed God's desire to restore His creation back to Himself and annihilate sin and its consequences altogether. But who would be the One to crush the serpent's

The Fall

head? As you read, look for allusions to Him throughout the Old Testament.

AS YOU STUDY...

- God provided for Adam and Eve in Eden. They had food to eat and were given purpose, to be fruitful and multiply. They were blessed but still sinned. What does this teach us about the nature of sin?
- Adam and Eve defined good and evil on their own terms instead of trusting in God's definition of good and evil. What does this reveal about human nature?
- Was God's removal of Adam and Eve from the Garden done as an act of justice in love? Think about why God had to remove them from the Garden.
- How does your own sin affect you? Others?

THE CYCLE OF REBELLION. Sin utterly destroyed God's good creation. Genesis 6:5-6 says, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." A loving partnership with His creation was always God's desire. But now, His creation was tainted and His partners, Adam and Eve, were separated from Him. How would He restore order and purpose to the earth and reconcile Himself to the humans he loved? Instead of destroying everything and starting over, He did something shocking!

Out of the many generations that came from Adam and Eve, he chose one man's family to jumpstart His plan for restoration. In Genesis 12, God called a man named Abram to leave his country to go to a land called Canaan. "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3). There is something about Abram's faith that should catch our attention. By moving his family to Canaan,

Israel

he demonstrated both faith and obedience. Through Abram's family, God intended to bless every family of the earth. God intended to use this family (who eventually became known as the nation of Israel) to model to the other nations what a loving, trusting relationship with God could look like.

But time after time, man repeats the same pattern: rejecting God's love and authority. We see this pattern of mistrust after God delivered Israel out of Egypt. We see this pattern play out during Israel's accusation of God not being good as they wandered through the wilderness. We see it after Israel broke covenant with God by worshipping idols and breaking His laws. We see it time and time again from one king to the next as the desire for power, influence and autonomy ruled their hearts. The warnings of prophets were mostly ignored and drowned out by the manipulating voice of the serpent. The kingdom of Israel split in two and was sent into exile for their disobedience and rebellion.

Over and over again, these Old Testament books expose three things: 1.) humanity's inability to love God, 2.) humanity's inability to keep the law and 3.) humanity's inability to self-govern.

But over and over again, we watch a faithful God pursue humanity and cause His redemption plan to go forth. It's from this vantage point that we come to the realization that rule following doesn't change sinful hearts. Even sacrifices have their limits in their ability to atone for sin. God is after something more than just good behavior and animal sacrifices. He is after our hearts. What humanity needs is a heart transformation.

AS YOU STUDY...

- Where in these Old Testament books can you see the same patterns of mistrust of God's love and authority from Genesis 3? What areas of your own life suffer from mistrust of God's love or authority?
- Pay attention to how the Garden of Eden informed the way the temple was designed. Why is this significant? Where does God ultimately want to dwell?
- Look out for symbols and recurring themes that foreshadow the One who will crush the serpent's head with his heel.

Redemption

THE KING APPEARS. After closing out the Old Testament, it's clear that man will never be able to fix the sin problem. It would take God himself coming down to earth to clean up the mess made by humanity. So he does— it's His story after all. The New Testament opens with the genealogy of Jesus. (Don't skip this!) Starting with Abraham, generations are accounted for, ultimately leading to Jesus Himself. The One whom earlier Scripture has alluded to finally makes His earthly appearance to see the rescue plan through.

From the virgin-birth of Jesus, to His spirit-filled baptism and miracles performed, Jesus proves to be the fulfillment of every prophecy spoken, law given and the focal point of God's redemptive plan. He came to the earth (fully God and fully man) to proclaim the coming of a new kingdom. This kingdom wouldn't be modeled after earthly kingdoms, but would be an eternal one, forever free from the influence and affects of sin. The Israelites had long awaited a king, a Messiah, to rescue them from oppressors. But this rescue plan was even better!

Right after His baptism and affirmation by God, Jesus

was led by the Holy Spirit to the wilderness. It's there that He overcame the temptation of Satan by doing the very thing Adam and Eve should have done from the beginning — trusting in the goodness and word of God. Jesus resisted Satan and crushed his head under his heel. Jesus demonstrated that with the Spirit's empowerment, we too, can resist the enemy's deception and lies.

With this backdrop, Jesus began his earthly ministry. He chose twelve disciples to travel with Him from town to town preaching about the kingdom of God and demonstrating its power. He shared meals with sinners, healed the sick and lived a life that revealed God's love for humanity. Jesus modeled what it looked like to trust God the Father and be empowered by His Spirit to serve and love others well.

What would it take for humanity to follow Jesus? What would it cost them? And would they trust God's plan or continue to follow their own? Along the way, some choose to trust in His plan and others choose to reject God's salvation.

Jesus came to bring and fulfill a new covenant for Israel and eventually, humanity altogether. He lived a perfect

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life, free from sin. He was the fulfillment of the law and the only one who could step into a broken world and single-handedly restore it. The crescendo of Jesus' life and ultimate solution for repairing creation and reuniting man to God was His death. Jesus' crucifixion paid the price for humanity's sin. His resurrection three days later proved to all creation that he was and is the Son of God, King of kings, Lord of lords. For anyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus, this act of humility and sacrifice at the cross ends the bondage of sin forever.

And here is the best part... God still wants to partner with us in seeing all of humanity restored and brought into His new kingdom! In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age." Jesus empowers us by His Spirit and calls us to seek out the lost and point them back to Him.

AS YOU STUDY...

- Look back to Genesis 1. What similarities of Jesus' baptism do you notice?
- After reading some of Jesus' parables describing the kingdom of God in Matthew, what do you notice is different about Jesus' kingdom compared to the kingdoms we read about in the Old Testament?
- God's covenant promise to raise up One who would defeat Satan is fulfilled. What other covenant promises do you see fulfilled in the New Testament through Jesus?
- Romans 8:16 now calls us co-heirs with Christ. Write a list of all you will inherit as a follower of Jesus.

Restoration

THY KINGDOM COME. Now with our salvation secured and our relationship with God intact through the blood of Jesus, we wait expectantly. We wait in a posture of “already and not yet.” The enemy has already been defeated. The war has already been won. The battle is not yet over. However, the enemy still wars for souls here on earth. His deception still goes forth, even among the church. His influence still lures many into bondage.

But in Christ, we persevere. Our participation with God as kingdom priests comes through sharing the good news of the gospel with others. Our testimony of what Christ has done in our lives serves as a reminder that we have been purchased and our salvation is sealed.

We still face trials, endure persecution and experience suffering, but we are not without hope. We wait with confidence in knowing that Christ has conquered Satan, death and the grave. One day, Satan and all of God’s enemies will be thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur to remain forever. (Revelation 20:7-10).

A loving partnership with man was always God’s desire.

As Christ's bride, we prepare ourselves and look forward to a day when we are invited to join the marriage supper of the Lamb. On that day, we will rejoice in the victory of Christ and our salvation in Him.

“...‘Hallelujah! For the Lord God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure’ — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints”(Revelation 19: 6-8)

When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, creation was affected. Romans 8:20-22 says, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”

But there will come a day when God will make all

Restoration

things new. His creation will no longer groan but will be renewed and restored back to good order and peace.

In this new heaven and earth, the new Jerusalem, there will be no need for a temple because Jesus will be the temple where God will dwell among his people (Revelation 21:22). There will be no sun or moon because the glory of God will provide light (Revelation 21:23). A river will flow from the throne of God and on either side of that river will be a tree of life, representing God's provision we saw in Genesis. In this new Jerusalem, we will reign as kings and worship as priests in His presence forever. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

In His Story, He wins. We win. His Story, is our story and the end is truly just the beginning.

AS YOU STUDY...

- Reflect on the Lion and Lamb imagery. What do you think these images of Jesus express to us as his followers?
- Think back to the Garden in Genesis and New Jerusalem in Revelation. What are some similarities and differences between the two?
- How does this kingdom reality of “already, not yet” influence your walk with Christ?
- Reflect on this metanarrative and consider which things were familiar to you, which things were new and which things you want to spend more time studying and reflecting on.
- Who do you need to share this story with? Practice retelling this story in under two minutes and then go share it!

Sermon Notes

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