



In which ways have you looked at the Bible as a reference book or one big story?

Why is it important to see that all the stories of the Bible are tied to one big story?



What if *The Lord of the Rings* was boiled down to a list of facts? How interesting would that story be to you?

What are the propositional truths of the Gospel?

Why would mere propositional truths—about *The Lord of the Rings* or the Gospel or any story—cause a sort of disconnect in people who do not know the rest of the story?

 Explore

Do you believe everyone depends on some story for life to make sense?

What story
will you pass
on to others
today?

Give an example of how our everyday communication is filled with story.

What stories, books, or movies have had a significant influence in your life?



The disciples were living in the wrong story. In what ways do we find people living in the wrong story today?



What do you think the common responses are to these questions?

How did it all begin?

What went wrong?

Is there any hope?

What will the future hold?



Mirror

In Paul's letter to Philemon, he says, "I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ" (v. 6, ESV). How could sharing God's story enrich my personal walk with Jesus?

Do I recognize the overarching nature of God's story in the world and in my own life?

Do I live in humble, joyful dependence upon the Gospel every day?

What elements of my life are detached from the narrative? *Ask God what steps He would have you take to change that.*



God's ceaseless attributes cause each of us to encounter Him uniquely.
What attribute of God do you embrace? What attribute of God do you resist?

Do you believe that people are already hardwired to know there is a God?



Where is the most beautiful place you've ever been?

Planet Earth is part of a gigantic solar system in a universe full of other planets and galaxies. Yet, as far as we know, Earth is the only planet that sustains life. What does this say about the uniqueness of Earth in God's creation?

“The sun with all those planets revolving around and dependent on it can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it has nothing else in the universe to do.” —Galileo⁷



What's your reaction to the thought that humans—we, ourselves!—are the crown jewel of God's creation? Is it difficult to believe that humans are the creatures He is most delighted in, even compared to the glories of the unseen universe?



What do you think it would be like to live in the Garden of Eden?

Is the Garden of Eden the world we've always wanted? Explain.



Mirror

Does God's creation awe me—does it inspire me to worship and obey Him?

How does my life reveal that God is the main character of my story?

How am I fulfilling my purpose to worship and obey as God originally created me to do?

In what ways does every person reflect the Creator?



List some recent world, national, and local events that illustrate the world has fallen from God's original plan.

What lie of Satan did Adam and Eve believe?

How is our disobedience similar to Adam and Eve's?



Adam and Eve used fig leaves to try to cover their sin. What modern-day fig leaves do we use to cover ours?

“All creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay.” Romans 8:19–21



What do you think of Timothy Keller's quote that we are far more sinful than we dare think?

Do you believe that everything in all of creation is broken due to the Fall?
What events in your life present evidence of this brokenness?



Mirror

What lie from Satan have I listened to and believed today?

Who is the determiner of right and wrong in my life today?

Am I broken over people who are broken?

Am I cognizant of how sin has affected everything in this world?

How does my own brokenness fit into the context of God's story?



How was God's rescue plan initiated in the Garden of Eden?



How did Christ's life display His perfect humanity? Perfect deity?

What is the significance of Jesus being without sin in order to be our Rescuer?

How important was it for Jesus to fulfill the Law? How important was it that Jesus had to die? How important was it that Jesus had to rise again?

“And [we] wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” ¹ Thessalonians 1:10 (NIV)



How—specifically—is the Gospel good news in your life?

Purpose Made Possible

The **greatest rescue** of all time was the rescue of human souls from the darkness of the enemy's camp. God planned for our rescue, made the arrangements, and stopped at nothing to accomplish it. Now that a rescue out of sin and darkness is **possible** through Jesus Christ, God's purpose for man is once again possible too—for by His death on the cross, He offered the ultimate act of worship and obedience to the Father. When we turn to the rescue found in Jesus, we are set free to once again **worship and obey** God, as He originally designed.



Mirror

Have I surrendered my futile attempts to fix myself? Have I trusted in Christ alone for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation unto God?

Am I resting in the truth that I am truly accepted because of Jesus' sacrifice, blood, and death?

How passionate am I to share the message of rescue with my family, friends, and coworkers?

Write your story of rescue in Christ in the context of God's bigger story.



Why do we need good endings in movies, books, and plays?

Give an example of a movie, book, or play that didn't have a happy resolution.
How did it feel?

We seek stories with good endings because deep down, this is what our souls were made for. We were not made to live in the midst of such heartache and pain. We were made for more than this life gives.

One day, God will set all things straight, and we will finally experience the good ending our hearts crave.



Do you think there is a universal desire for the story of life to turn out right?

Does your daily life exhibit a desire for the hope of eternity? Why is it true that Heaven wouldn't be Heaven without Jesus? Would it be possible to be content in Heaven if Jesus wasn't there?





Mirror

Why is there a universal desire for resolution in this life?

What keeps me from looking ahead in great hope toward the day when God will make all things new?

Am I living out the purpose that Christ bought back for me?

How does my daily life—attitudes, pursuits, values, etc.—expose where my heart has not fully embraced God's story?



What positive and negative thoughts come to mind when you think about sharing God's story with others?

List the fears that keep you from sharing God's story.

What excites and motivates you to share God's story?



Read John 4:1–42. What story did the woman tell?

Turn to someone else and practice sharing your story in the context of God's bigger story.



Consider how you might begin to identify God's image in those around you:
How does your spiritual mentor reflect the image of God?

How does the Christian that you just can't seem to get along with reflect
the image of God?

Now, how about that unbelieving coworker—where do you see traces
of God's image?

What about the entertainer or politician you disagree with?

Would our prejudices be eliminated if we saw people with talents, gifts,
and accomplishments that reflect God's image—and if we remembered
that we could learn from them?



Mirror

Where have I failed to see the image of God in people?

Do I believe that even the most notorious criminal bears the image of God?

How could purposely looking for the image of God in each person help combat prejudice?

How often do I encourage non-Christians by affirming the image of God in them?

How often do I encourage Christians by affirming the image of God in them?



Explore

Make a list of people you know.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)
- 11)
- 12)
- 13)
- 14)
- 15)
- 16)
- 17)
- 18)
- 19)
- 20)
- 21)

Everyone has an oikos and are themselves a part of someone's oikos. The difference for the Christian is that God is continually bringing people in and out of your oikos, your circle of influence, so that you may be a positive influence in their lives concerning the Gospel.

Let's say for example that your oikos has fifty people in it. Now most of us cannot interact with fifty people at the same time and do so with any depth to these relationships. However, we can carry on meaningful relationships with eight to fifteen people. These are the people God has strategically placed in your oikos so that you may share His story—and your life—with them.

These people are to become your **WVWVXS_ [k** For some of you, that may include twenty to twenty-five people; for others it may be three to four. The size is not the concerning factor. The important thing is that God has already placed in your life certain individuals that He wants you to be a positive influence upon. These are the people God is sending you to as His ambassador.

Developing Your Oikos

You already have an audience with people, so the real question is how will you practically begin to spread God's story to all you are connected to?

It's always helpful to put it on paper, so, first, list everyone you know and have some contact with. It is important in this step not to be **WVWV** but simply to list the names of those **WVWVag]` ai ž** The depth of relationship is not important at this time.



Why is it difficult to be honest with people about our weak and broken places?

What concerns do you have about being transparent with people who do not know Christ?



How can you begin to see yourself as a participant in God's story?

What's the difference between a "platitude attitude" (i.e., "grin and bear it" or "praise the Lord anyhow") and a real-life trust in God's help and power?





Are you excited about God's story of redemption?

How can you become more engaged in what God is doing?

Memory Verses

The Creation

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” Psalm 90:2 (ESV)

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

The Fall

“None is righteous, no, not one.” Romans 3:10 (ESV)

“The entire world is guilty before God.”
Romans 3:19 (NLT)

These verses are the ones featured in *The Story*. We recommend memorizing them, knowing them, and savoring them so that you have them in your heart and mind for your next Gospel conversation. These are certainly not the only verses that would be of help to you as you retell God’s story of rescue and redemption—use whatever verses fit each part of the story. The goal is to know God’s Word and to share it conversationally with others.

The Rescue

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.”

1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)

“Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world.”

Galatians 1:4 (NLT)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.”

John 6:47 (ESV)

The Restoration

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . God himself will be with them as their God. 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 21:1, 3–4 (ESV)