



Introduction

For the month of January, our Senior Pastor, David Chadwick, will take the whole church through a sermon series called, “Is There More?” which is focused on the story of the Bible. The Bible is a collection of 66 individual books, inspired by God and recorded by over 40 authors. The Bible tells a single, unified story, and that story is a key to understanding this world as well as any passage of the Bible.

The story of the Bible is not about you or me; it’s about God. The story shows us who God is, what He has done and is doing, and how, with His power, we can follow Him. The story of God has 4 acts, or parts – creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Over the course of the next 4 weeks, we’re going to look at each part of this story. We’ll practice looking at Bible passages through this lens and also looking at life through this lens.

We have developed this discussion guide for your Life Group, to help you to discuss the concepts you hear in the weekend messages.

How to Use This Guide

These guides can be used either before or after the sermon.

Each guide has a statement of its theme, which summarizes the topic of that session. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion. If your group begins getting off topic, look back at that statement and bring the conversation back.

You will notice that some of the questions are the same from week-to-week. This choice is intentional so people can learn how to read the Bible for themselves. The most basic form of reading the Bible is to help people understand who God is, who we are, and realize that the Bible calls us to change with the power of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of each guide, there is a simple prayer prompt related to the discussion of that particular meeting. You, as the leader, can use this to shape your closing prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. We have no power to understand His will or live His way without His help. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
2. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or insights they heard from somewhere else. Since there will be a related sermon, people might want to focus on what David said during his message. However, the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word and what the biblical author meant, not what we think or what we heard from others. So, keep your eyes on the Scriptures and always bring the conversation back to the text you're discussing. One way to do that is by saying, “That’s a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we’re studying?”



3. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** Often times, when we discuss Scripture, we are general when we talk about how to apply it. For instance, we might say, "Jesus wants me to pray about the world more." But that's abstract and hard to implement. So, ask your group members about specifics - "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"
4. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to answer all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time.

As an additional resource, there is a 6-minute video called "The Story" which is located on RightNow Media here: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/179507> which summarizes the 4 parts of the Bible story very well. You'll use this resource in week 4 of this discussion guide, but you can also use it sooner (and more than once) to help your group know and understand this story. If you or some of your group members miss a part of the sermon series or one of these discussions, you can use this video as a recap.

If you do not have a Right Now Media account, use this link to sign-up:

<https://www.rightnow.org/Account/Invite/ForestHillChurch>

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.



Week 1: Creation

Sermon Date: January 5-6, 2019

Theme: Out of love, God created the world to display His beauty and to share it with us. He made us to reflect His image and to live in a relationship with Him – one where we find joy in trusting and obeying Him. The Bible constantly points back to God’s goodness in Creation, His authority over everything (including us), and His love displayed in creating us to joyfully live with Him.

- **What is one of your favorite stories? What appeals to you about that story?**

Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:26-2:25 aloud.

- **What did this passage reveal about God? What He is like, what He has done, or what He desires?**

Leader’s Note: The opening of the Bible points to God’s character – His authority over all creation including mankind, His right to rule, His power, His creativity. All of creation – including you and me – are dependent on God for everything. We may like to think we are independent, but nothing is farther from the truth.

- **Imagine reading this section to someone you just met in the mall. What questions do you think he/she might have about these opening chapters? How would you respond?**
- **Why do you think the Bible tells us that God created, but not *how* He created?**
- **What did this passage reveal about mankind? What we are meant to be or do?**

Leader’s Note: We are dependent on God. We are unique – made in His image – so every person we meet deserves the respect and honor of an image-bearer of God. We were made to display the image and glory of God, to live in joyful worship and obedience to Him.

- **How can this passage change how we look at the world? Nature, other people, and ourselves?**

Leader’s Note: God is the center of the Bible and the world was created to declare His goodness. Every sunset should lead us to worship Him. Every person should be respected because they are made in His image. When we look at creation, we can often look at it and admire it, but not admire the Creator who made it.

- **How can this passage shed light on understanding other passages of the Bible? What are some ways that the Bible could remind us of this first act of creation?**

Leader’s Note: Every passage points to God’s goodness and creation. Every character or setting is made by God. Every sin in the Bible is a violation of His authority over creation.

- **Over the next week, what will you do with what you learned/heard from God’s Word? How will it change how you think, believe or act?**

Close in prayer, beginning with praising God for His beauty as seen in the world around us.



Week 2: Fall

Sermon Date: January 12-13, 2019

Theme: Even though we were made to find joy in God, we wanted more. We wanted to be God and make our own way in the world. Out of that desire, Adam and Eve chose to disobey and rebel against God. The effects of that sin echoes throughout Creation. To understand the Bible, we must understand our rebellion and our inability to save ourselves from the punishment for it.

- **Have you ever had to confront someone about something they did wrong? How did it go? How do most people respond when confronted with wrongdoing? Why?**

Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 3:1-24.

- **What does this passage reveal about God? His character, desires, or actions?**
- **What evidence can you see of God's mercy in this passage?**

Leader's Note: There are many evidences of God's mercy here. But one you will want to bring to your group's attention is the promise in Genesis 3:15. This verse is a foreshadows the coming of Jesus. After the promise has been made, God clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins, showing that God sacrificed an animal to cover their nakedness. This sacrifice has been seen has (1) sealing the promise/covenant in Genesis 3:14-19, (2) a foreshadow of the system of animal sacrifices that was instituted in Moses' time to cover sins, and (3) another foreshadow of Jesus' sacrifice to cover our sin.

- **What does this passage reveal about mankind? Who we were made to be or who we are?**
- **Why do you think Adam and Eve ate the fruit? In what ways can you identify with their thoughts or feelings?**
- **What are the effects of the Fall on people and on creation? How have you seen these effects this week?**

Leader's Note: The Fall had at least 4 effects: (1) It broke our communion with God. We were no longer safe in His presence because we were rebels against Him. (2) It broke our relationship with ourselves. We began to feel shame and guilt, to hide from God. (3) It broke our relationships with others. We began to blame others, to fight and criticize. (4) It broke the natural world. The world now experiences so-called 'natural disasters' (i.e. hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes) and our bodies are plagued with diseases (i.e. cancer). These effects can be seen even today.

- **How might this passage inform how we read the rest of the Bible? What evidence might we see of 'the Fall' in the rest of Scripture?**

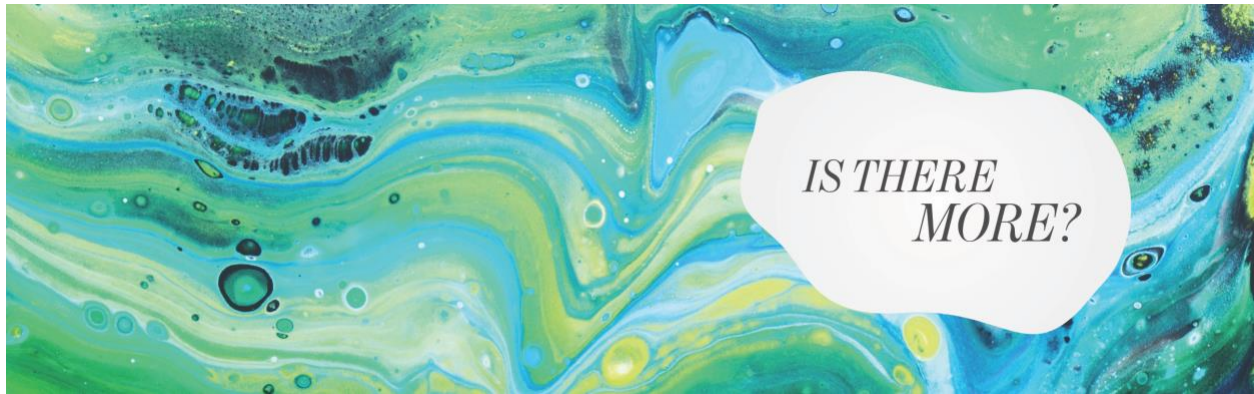
Leader's Note: Every sin, every illness or infirmity, every fight for unrighteous reasons, every point of pride, every act of unbelief in the Bible points to the Fall. Every supposed hero in the Bible is still plagued by sin – for instance, Noah gets drunk and curses his son; King David was an adulterer; Peter has racism towards non-Jews. Every 'hero' in the Bible displays the sinful nature of mankind, except Jesus.



Furthermore, God's anger towards people who sin or rebel against Him points again to the fallen nature of mankind and our need for a Savior.

- **Over the next week, what will you do with what God's Word revealed? With His Spirit, what changes will you make in what you think, do, or believe?**

Close in prayer, asking God's forgiveness for our sin and His help to understand His Word.



Week 3: Redemption

Sermon Date: January 19-20, 2019

Theme: Unable to save ourselves, God sent a Redeemer. The word, redemption, means deliverance by paying a price, like paying a ransom. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God makes promises of redemption. He promises a Savior for all mankind (Genesis 3:15) would come through Abraham (Genesis 12) and through the lineage of King David (2 Samuel 7). God would use sinful and sometimes evil people to bring about His promise.

- **Describe the most intense fight you've had with a family member or close friend. How did (or might) you reconcile with that person?**

Ask a volunteer to read Colossians 1:13-23 and Romans 8:18-22.

- **The word 'redemption' means 'deliverance by paying a price.' Based on these passages, what is being delivered, and what is it being delivered from?**

Leader's Note: The Fall had two major effects. (1) The Created Order was disrupted, meaning that mankind and the natural world does not operate as intended by the Creator. There are diseases, depression, and relational strife, as well as other signs of disorder. (2) We, as God's image-bearers, are at odds with God. His anger is fixed on us because of our rebellion. Jesus paid the price to save us from our sin if we trust Him and He paid the price to restore the world to its original design.

- **In Colossians 1, why is forgiveness and redemption so important?**
- **Based Romans 8, we know something. What do we know? What will the creation give birth to?**
- **What do these passages reveal about God? His actions, character, or desires?**
- **What do these passages reveal about people? Who we are or are meant to be?**
- **What effects does the death and resurrection of Christ have for people who believe in Him? What effects does the death and resurrection of Christ have on creation?**
- **Reflect on the topics from the past 3 weeks— Creation, Fall, and Redemption (if some people missed those sessions, ask a volunteer to summarize the teachings in a minute or two). How can these themes help you to understand the Bible, even the hard parts?**

Leader's Note: Since the Fall of Man in Genesis 1-11, the whole Bible points us to the Redeemer. We see God calling individuals like Abraham who is promised to bless the nations and like Moses who is called to deliver the nation of Israel from slavery. We see God uniting a nation (Israel) who are meant to declare the glory of God around the world. We see God remaining faithful to bring redemption, even when people are sinful and He gets angry with them. We see God promising to bring someone who will save the world. The Old Testament points to God's Redeemer, and the New Testament brings us understanding of Him and calls us to follow Him.



- **Based on what you read today, what will you do with what God revealed? With His power, what change will you make to what you think, do, or believe?**

Close in prayer, thanking God for the redemption He brought in Jesus Christ.



Week 4: Restoration

Sermon Date: January 26-27, 2019

Theme: The story of the Bible doesn't just help us understand the Bible, but helps us understand life itself. We can see glimpses of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration throughout the world, and seeing those glimpses can help us share the gospel with those who don't know Jesus.

Prior to your next group meeting, you may want to print a copy of the next 2 pages for each of your group members or enough copies for pairs to share.

This week, we're going to do something a little different. Knowing the Big Story can help us to better understand the parts of the Bible, but it can also help us to understand the world and share the Bible with others. This week, we'll see how this story can help us make sense of the world and how it can help us share Christ with others.

As a group, watch the video called "The Story" (6 min). It can be found on Right Now Media here: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/179507>.

After watching the video break off in groups of 2 or 3 and practice sharing the Big Story with each other. After about 10 minutes, bring the group back together.

- **How was it to share that story with one another? Was it uncomfortable or natural?**

Next, choose one of the pictures on the next pages, and ask:

- **How can you see either some parts or the whole Big Story (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration) in this picture?**
 - If there's time, choose and discuss another picture.
- After discussing the picture(s), ask: **How can seeing the world through this lens help you in sharing the gospel with others?**

Close in prayer, asking God for the courage and wisdom to share God's story with neighbors or friends.

