

# STORY OF GOD: FAST TRACK

BY SOMA TACOMA

This version of the Story of God was created by Soma Tacoma years ago and has been used fruitfully by many Missional Communities and churches. It's a shorter version of the Story of God experience, which was designed to be used with certain groups that don't have the time and availability to commit to a longer experience. The Fast Track has been used in 2 primary ways. It's been used to help Christians by giving them a better grasp of the Bible, as one overarching story of God's relationship with his creation. It can be experienced in about 6 hours, with 4 distinct parts.

Many churches have taken groups of their people through it on a Saturday morning and afternoon. It's also been used to help introduce non-Christians to the major themes, relationships, and outcomes that the Bible describes. This can be hosted by a Missional Community with some of their non-Christian friends, over the course of 4 evenings. So, non-Christian neighbors and co-workers could be invited to do this on 4 Tuesday nights in any given month, as an example. Often this looks like a quick meal together, and then another 60-90 minutes of telling a part of the story and discussing it with the group.

I've experienced this with hundreds of people through the years, and even seasoned Christians have consistently said it helped them see and learn many new things that they had never understood before. It's a powerful experience!



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# STORY OF GOD FAST TRACK

Version 1.24



### Introducing the Story of God Fast Track

Take a few moments to welcome everyone. Introduce yourself or your team. Be upbeat.

#### Pray.

We use the story as a foundation for discipleship...

The Fast Track is a hybrid of the Story of God and Storyformed Way...

An ideal setting for doing the Story is in a home with a missional community, including some who don't yet call Jesus Lord—it's a much more fruitful experience with not-yet-believers. Take a minute and picture a friend or neighbor who doesn't know this Story. Have their face in mind and think about the Story, the dialogue, your responses through their ears. What would they think? What questions would they have?

Often after hearing a great story or seeing a movie we want to sit around and discuss the deeper meaning or remind ourselves of our favorite parts of the story. And we learn things from stories that were not right on the surface. That's what we're doing today with God's Story.

### Set the Training Tone

*Spend some time setting up the right atmosphere for dialogues which will foster growth.*

- This Story comes from the Bible. **Some of us believe it's true**, but you can engage the story and the dialogue even if you don't...
- **We are here to learn and change** (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community)
- **Have fun**, keep things moving and participatory.
- **Welcome a challenge** from me or others in the group (let's give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions etc.).
- **Strive to be honest** and vulnerable and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- **Only discuss information that has emerged from narratives that have already been told.** If you already something about the Story from the Bible, don't jump ahead, let the Story unfold. Sticking with only what we've heard so far keeps the playing field level for everyone.
- Put away all your notebooks, computers and even Bibles during this time. **Simply engage the Story and dialogue orally.** We encourage you to read the biblical passages the narratives come from later.
- If you are here as part of training to use the Storyformed Way yourself, **resist the urge to dissect what we are doing** or think about how you might lead the Story. A crucial part of your training is simply to allow the Story to move your heart. Talking about methodology is for later.

## Pre-Story Setup

### Ask this question:

**If you could imagine the world the way it should be, what would it be like?**

There was a day when the world was very much like you described... and a day when it will be again.

What if we could live in a world where there was no sickness or pain or death? No pollution, poverty, war or hatred? Is it possible that the world that we all want, what we all dream of, is exactly the world that God originally created and intended for us?! And what if God actually has a plan and a way to set everything right again? The Bible shows us that there is such a way... Let's start at the beginning of The Story...

## Scene 1 ~ Beginnings

*Story from Genesis 1-3, Job 38, Isaiah 14, Revelation 12*

This story is found in the Bible, and is about God, a being that was before all things, and created this earth and everything on it. God *alone* always does what is good and right and perfect—the Bible calls him holy.

While God was creating the foundations of the earth, angels watched with amazement, singing together and shouting for joy! God created these beautiful angels to worship him. But some of these angels rebelled against God and his ways — any rebellion against God is called sin. The angel who led this rebellion would now be called Satan, which means adversary. God will not allow sin to remain in his presence, so he sent the rebellious angels, also called demons, into darkness on the earth, to face final punishment later.

***(Pause for a moment...)***

## Scene 2 ~ First Humans

*Story from Genesis 1-2, Psalm 8*

Then God decided he would create another being, one that was lower than the angels, called a human. So God took the earth and prepared it as a place for humans to live. His Spirit moved over the surface of the earth as...

*He made light—separating it from the darkness...*

*He divided the oceans and the sky...*

*He gathered the waters—so dry land would appear...*

*He grew plants, flowers, and trees with seeds to reproduce themselves...*

*He created the sun, the moon and the stars—setting the days and seasons in to motion...*

*He filled the seas with fish, the sky with birds, and the earth with all kinds of wild animals!*

God put great care and creativity into all of his creation, Then he looked at everything and said, *"This is good!"*

After he had prepared the earth God said, *"Let us make humans in our image, to be like us. They will be in charge of the earth and the plants and the animals that live on it."*

So God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed his own breath into him, giving him life. This man would be called Adam.

Later, God created the first woman, Eve, from one of Adam's ribs, to be a companion and helper for him. So God created both the man and the woman in his own image.

God joined them in a close relationship as husband and wife, where they devoted themselves to each other. Although Adam and Eve were naked, they felt no shame.

God blessed the man and the woman with the ability to continue creating through having children. He told them, *"Be fruitful and multiply."*

He placed the humans in a beautiful garden, a place where they had everything they needed to live life to the fullest.

In the center of the garden God placed two special trees. One was the Tree of Life and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil. God said that Adam and Eve could eat from any tree in the garden, except for one—the tree that would give them knowledge of good and evil. He warned them not to eat from this tree or they would surely die...

Daily, God would come and spend time with the humans, walking with them in the cool of the day. He showed them how to live in the best possible way—a life lived close to God and under his protection—a life that is full and complete. And Adam and Eve loved being with God.

As God looked over all of his creation he thought, *"this is VERY GOOD!"* After creating all of this God rested, and he set aside a day of rest each week for his creation.

## **Scene 1 & 2 Dialogue ~ Beginnings & First Humans**

9:20 (20)

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

### **1. How did God make humans unique among his creations?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *They were made in God's image—this is known as Imago Dei!*
- *He breathed his own breath into Adam.*
- *He was given authority to rule over the garden and all the animals.*

### **2. How do we know humans were created good?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *They were made in God's image!*
- *God declared them "Excellent."*

### **3. Who do you view yourself to be? What makes up your identity? (roles, family, abilities, occupation?) How important are these things on making up your identity?**

### **4. Be honest... what "identity" in your life currently provides the most powerful dose of self-worth?**

### **5. 📖 What would change if our identity depended on the Imago Dei for our worth?**

**[Resting Slide]**



**6. What kind of relationship did God have with the humans?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *He spent time with Adam and Eve. They loved being with God.*
- *He gave them responsibility—to care for God’s creation and to create.*
- *He showed them the best possible way to live.*
- *He protected them from evil.*
- *They loved being with God. He gave them the ability to choose.*

**7. What kind of relationship did Adam & Eve have with each other?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Close, Eve came out of Adam’s body.*
- *Naked and unashamed.*

**8. What do you think is significant about the two trees in the center of the garden?**

**9. Do you think that humans were created to live forever? What shows us this in the Story?**

**10. What do we learn about God in this scene?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *God is the source of all blessing...*
- *God is all powerful. God is the creator of all things*
- *God created humans in his image.*
- *God showed the humans how to live in the best possible way.*
- *God trusts humans with the care of his creation.*
- *God gives humans the ability to create.*
- *God provides and takes care of humans—the garden had everything they needed.*
- *God enjoys his creation—he said it was excellent in every way!*
- *God sets aside time for rest!*

**11.  What do we know so far about the meaning of life? Why are we here?**

*Be sure to direct folks back to the Story for their answers!*

- *To bear God’s image well*
- *To hang out and be in relationship with God*
- *To take care of God’s creation (stuff), which includes other people...*

**12. If this story does not center on us (but on God) how do we find our purpose or value in life?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *We must find our purpose and identity in the One who gave them to us.*
- *Enjoying and learning from God—spending time with him and living in his ways.*

**13. How does that contrast to the way people think in our culture?**

*This question should be allowed to create some tension here...*

## Scene 3 ~ Separation

Story from Genesis 1-3

One day, a serpent—the most clever of all the animals in the garden—came to the woman. He asked Eve, *“Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?”*

Eve told him, *“No, we can eat from any tree in the garden. It’s only the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that we are not allowed to eat from—or even touch, or we will die.”*

The serpent said to her, *“You won’t die! God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God—knowing everything, both good and evil.”*

When Eve saw how good and delicious the fruit looked, and that it would make her wise, she took some of it and ate it. She also gave some to Adam, her husband, who was with her, and he ate it! They chose not to believe God and to believe the lie. Instantly their eyes were opened and they became filled with shame and fear. They strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover their nakedness.

Toward evening they heard God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. God called to them, *“Where are you?”* Adam answered, *“I heard you coming and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”* God answered, *“Why are you ashamed of being naked? Did you eat the fruit I told you not to eat?”* Adam blamed Eve saying, *“It was the woman you gave me. She gave me some.”* Then God said to Eve, *“How could you do this?”* Eve blamed the serpent saying, *“The serpent tricked me into eating the fruit.”*

So God said to the snake, *“Because you have done this, you will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. You will be the enemy of the woman and her children. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head.”*

God’s heart was broken because of their disobedience, but he could not ignore what they had done. God always does what is good, right and perfect—his perfect justice required that there be consequences for rebellion. So God punished Adam and Eve by putting them out of the Garden outside of his care and protection. No longer following God’s ways, they were now subject to sickness, pain and death. God continued to love Adam and Eve—he even made clothing for them out of animal skins so they would not be ashamed outside of the Garden.

### Scene 3 Dialogue ~ Separation

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

#### 14. What did Adam and Eve choose to do in the story?

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Believe the lie of the serpent...choose to NOT trust God’s words... trust in self apart from God...trust in their own abilities to manage good & evil in their lives.*

#### 15. What was the real temptation that Adam & Eve were presented with by the serpent?

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *To choose self apart from relationship with God (pride)*

- *and to believe that we are more equipped to manage the good and evil, right and wrong in our own life.*

**16. What was God’s initial response to Adam right after he had disobeyed?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *God went looking for them... asked a question, “Where are you?”*

**17. What was the consequence of their actions?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Judgment—separation from God.*
- *Relationships broken with God and each other.*
- *Sickness, pain and death*
- *Mercy. He did not destroy them and also covered their nakedness and shame.*

**18. Why do you think God required consequences for their sin and rebellion? Why didn’t God just overlook their rebellion?**

- *God will never allow sin to remain in his presence. He always does good, right and perfect (Holy).*

**19. Are we like Adam and Eve or different from them?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *We are just like them.*
- *Often, despite knowing God’s commands, we choose to go our own way and rebel.*
- *We manage right and wrong from our own perspective instead of from God’s.*
- *We try to be our own god and displace God in our lives.*

**20. 📖 An American Story<sup>i</sup>**

*Birth > School > College > Starter Job > Starter Marriage > Picket Fence > 2.5 Kids > 2<sup>nd</sup> Marriage > Secure Job > Dump Kids > Retire to Florida > Death*

- **What is the motive behind this “American Story”? What is the outcome focused on?**
- **Who does this story center on—whose story is being lived out?**
- **How powerful is this story in our culture? In your experience?**
- **Do you think you can live this story and still please God?**
- **How is this version of the “American Story” different from the way God started writing The Story? Is there a way to get back to living in the “original” story? (God’s Story)**

**21. What do we learn about God in this story?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *He seems to know all things: He knew Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree.*
- *God will never allow evil to remain in his presence: He judged each of the characters in the story. He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden, and away from his presence. He promised One who would come to kill the serpent.*
- *He keeps his promises: Although they did not die immediately, Adam and Eve did in fact die.*



- *He is the source of all grace: He warned them in advance... He made clothing for them of animal skins. The innocent animals were killed on their behalf so they could have clothing/covering.*

## Scene 1

*Story from Genesis 4, Hebrews 11*

After leaving the garden, Adam and Eve had two sons; one was named Cain and the other named Abel.

When their sons grew up, Cain became a farmer, and Abel became a shepherd.

At harvest time, people would bring portions of their work—called offerings—and give them to God as gifts.

So Cain brought some of his farm produce, and in faith, Abel brought the very best lambs from his flock and they offered them to God. When God saw their gifts, he accepted Abel and his offering but rejected Cain and his offering.

This made Cain very angry and upset.

*“Why are you so angry?” God asked Cain. “Why do you look so discouraged? Won’t you be accepted if you do what’s right? But if you refuse to do what’s right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at your door, waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must bring it under control.”*

Soon after that, Cain suggested to his brother, Abel, *“Why don’t we go out into the field...”*

While they were walking in the field, Cain attacked and killed his brother. This was the first murder described in the Bible.

Later on, God asked Cain, *“Where is your brother Abel?”*

*“I don’t know!” Cain replied. “Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?”*

But God said, *“What have you done? Listen... your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! I am removing you from this land that you’ve corrupted with your brother’s blood. From now on you will be homeless — a fugitive who wanders from place to place.”*

Cain replied to God, *“This punishment is more than I can handle! You have removed me from my home... and from your presence; you have made me a fugitive. All who see me will try to kill me!”*

God replied, *“No! Anyone who tries to harm you will receive seven times your punishment.”*

Then God put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to attack him.

Cain left God’s presence and traveled to the land east of the garden, where he would start a family of his own.

## **Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Cain & Abel**

- 1. What did God say to Cain after he rejected him and his offering? What do you think that meant?**
  - *Won't you be accepted if you do what is right? But if you refuse to do what is right, sin is waiting...*  
*God's question assumes Cain knew what was right. "Won't **you** be accepted..." implies it's more about Cain and his heart than the gift.*
  - *The Story mentions that Abel, by FAITH, brought his offering to God... (Hebrews 11)*
- 2. Why do you think Cain killed his brother?**
- 3. What was God's reaction to the murder?**
  - *Why didn't God just ignore what Cain had done? What punishment did Cain deserve?*
  - *God did not repay evil with evil—he showed fairness and grace.*
- 1. Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?**
- 2. What do we learn about God in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)**
  - *God is interested in people's lives—he wants to interact with them.*
  - *God punishes sin. God is merciful.*
  - *God knows all things.*
  - *God provides a way for us to live with him.*
  - *God alone is good. God's ways are not our ways.*

## Scene 1

*Story from Genesis 4-9*

The number of humans on the earth grew rapidly. Not only did rebellion spread from Adam and Eve to their sons, it spread from generation to generation.

Even though humans were created in God's image, each person chose to disobey God's ways. Humans were completely out of control, acting out in selfishness and violence all the time.

When God saw that the people's hearts and minds were filled with evil day and night, his heart was broken. So God decided to start over, saying, *"I will completely wipe out the human race that I've created. I am sorry that I ever made them."*

But there was one man, named Noah, who still had a close relationship with God. Noah was the only blameless man living on earth at that time. So God said to Noah, *"I have decided to cover the earth with a flood, destroying everything alive! But, I will give you a plan to keep you safe."*

God told Noah to build a large boat called an ark, giving him specific instructions about how big to make it and what it should look like. God said to him, *"Make an ark from wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then build many decks and stalls for animals inside of it. I promise to keep you safe in this ark! A pair of every kind of animal—a male and female—will come to you to be kept alive. You will also bring seven pairs of animals that I approved for you to eat and sacrifice. And remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals."*

So Noah did everything exactly as he was told. Just as God had said, the floods came — water burst from the earth and rain poured from the sky. When the waters came, Noah and his family and all of the animals boarded the ark. As the waters rose, the boat floated safely on the surface. The flood covered even the tallest mountains, and all living creatures on the earth were destroyed, except for those on the ark.

After 40 days, the rains stopped. Many months passed as the waters slowly began to dry up. For weeks, Noah sent out a dove to see if it could find dry land. Finally, the dove returned with an olive leaf in its mouth. Noah sent the dove out again, and when it didn't come back, he knew it was safe to return to land. As soon as Noah came off of the ark, he built an altar, selected pure animals from every approved species, and sacrificed them to God as a symbol of thankfulness and worship.

God was pleased with Noah's sacrifice and said, *"Even though people's thoughts and actions are bent toward evil from the time they're children, I promise to never again destroy all living things with a flood. As a symbol of my promise, I will hang a rainbow in the clouds. When I see the rainbow, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth."*

Then God told Noah and his sons, *"I have put all animals under your control. You can use them for food, but you must never eat animals that still have their lifeblood in them. Life is in the blood, and all life belongs to me! Those who murder must be punished by death."*

God blessed Noah and his sons, telling them to have many children and once again fill the earth with people.

## Scene 1 Dialogue ~ The Flood

1. **Why did God flood the earth and destroy everything? Do you think he had good reasons for doing this?**
  - *The heart of every human was completely evil.*
2. **What do the stories we have heard so far show us about what humans are like?**
  - *Since the fall of Adam and Eve every person has rebelled against God.*
3. **From this story, how does God feel about humans?**
  - *Disappointment and anger at our corruption.*
  - *Compassion: by saving the human race and making a promise to not destroy us again.*
4. **What did God say to Noah about the blood from the sacrifices? Why was this important?**
  - *All life belongs to God and life is in the blood. It is God himself who gives life.*
  - *When Noah came out of the ark, he offered sacrifices to God presumably as a way of thanking God for showing him grace.*
5. **What does the story teach us about God?**
  - *God is powerful—in control of the elements.*
  - *God will never allow evil to remain in his presence. The flood is absolute confirmation that God always judges sin in all men.*
  - *God is the source of all grace. He saved Noah and his family. Before saving them, he warned them of the coming judgment, an act of grace, just like with Cain. He promised never to destroy the earth again, even though he knew man would continue to sin.*
  - *God knows all things. He knew what was in the heart of every man.*

## Scene 1

*Story from Genesis 11-18, 21*

Noah's descendants forgot about God and how he had spared them in the flood. They made plans to construct a great city out of brick.

They said, *"Let's build a monument to ourselves that reaches to the heavens to show how great we are."*

God saw how the people were gathering together to honor themselves instead of him. At that time, everyone on earth spoke the same language. So, God gave people different languages to make it harder for them to join together in rebellion. Then, He scattered them all over the earth. (pause)

A few generations later, God made a special promise to a man named Abram. This promise was called a *covenant*—representing the deepest of all agreements between two people.

God made this covenant with Abram...

*"I will make you the father of a great nation—famous throughout history.  
I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.  
I will bless the entire earth through your descendants."*

(You may want to repeat the covenant)

This was an amazing promise that God was making. He was choosing to bless the entire earth through one family! There was just one problem... Abram's wife, Sarai, was unable to have children. So how would the earth be blessed through their descendants? And besides, they were getting old. Abram was about 75 and Sarai was about 65!

God told Abram, *"Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show to you."*

God led Abram and his family to a land called Canaan. There, God told Abram, *"Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am giving this land to you and your descendants."* This land of Canaan would now be called the "Promised Land."

Some time passed, and Abram and Sarai still did not have a child. Abram asked God, *"What good are all of your blessings if I don't even have a son? I am getting old, and soon I will have to give my inheritance to one of my servants."*

God replied to Abram, *"No, you will have a son who will inherit everything that I have promised you."*

Then God took Abram out beneath the night sky and said, *"Look up into the heavens and count the stars. Your family will be like this—too many to count!"*

And Abram believed what God said, so God called him "righteous" because of his faith.

More years passed and Sarai became impatient with not having a child. She asked her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, to be a substitute mother for her.

Abram agreed with this plan. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to a boy named Ishmael. But Hagar and Sarai's relationship became strained. During Hagar's pregnancy, she began to despise Sarai. In return, Sarai treated her servant Hagar terribly. Eventually, Hagar and Ismael were sent away and not allowed to live with Abram's family.

When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again saying, *"I am the mighty God; serve me with your entire life and live purely. I will keep my covenant with you for many generations to come. I am changing your name to Abraham, which means 'father of many nations.' Remember this... I will always be your God, and you will always be my people."*

Then God added, *"I am also changing your wife's name to Sarah, which means 'mother of many nations.' Very soon, she will be blessed with a son. You are to name this son Isaac."*

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief of God's promise.

Abraham wondered, *"How can I become a father at 100 years old? How can Sarah have a baby when she is almost 90?"*

Sarah thought, *"How could a worn out woman like me have a baby? And my husband is even older than I am!"*

Abraham asked God, *"Would you pass on your blessing through my son Ishmael?"*

But God said, *"Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for me? About a year from now, you will have a son. It is through Isaac that I will pass on my blessing—not through your servant's child."*

Sure enough, a year later—exactly as God had said—Sarah gave birth to their first son, naming him Isaac, which means "laughter."

The birth of Isaac was the beginning of God fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham. God desired for Abraham's descendants, called the Hebrews, to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to live in God's ways.

## **Scene 1 Dialogue**

- 1. Why did God stop the people from building a monument to themselves?**
- 2. What do we learn about Abraham from the story? About Sarah?**
  - *God selected him to carry out his blessing.*
  - *He was old!*
  - *He trusted God and left his home.*
  - *Even though he trusted, he struggled to believe what God had said.*
- 3. Where in the story did we see Abraham struggle to believe the promise?**
  - *Abraham thought he would have to give up his inheritance to one of his servants.*

- *Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise and thought "How could this happen...?"*

**4. Why did God call Abram righteous? What do you think it means to be "righteous"?**

**5. What was God's relationship with Abraham?**

**6. What do we call this special promise that God made with Abraham? How is it special?**

**Where have we seen God make a promise or covenant before?**

- *With Cain and with Noah.*

**7. What did God promise to Abraham?**

- *To make him the father of a great nation, giving him many descendants.*
- *To bless and protect him.*
- *To bless all the nations of the earth through him.*

**8. If you had to wait 25 years for a promise of God to come true, would you still believe God?**

**9. What does this promise tell us about what God is like?**

- *God desires to bless all people.*
- *God has chosen a family (nation) to be his blessing and to live in his ways.*
- *God will protect and bless his people.*

Quick stretch break



## Bridge Story

Years later this son Isaac had his own son named Jacob—his name was later changed to Israel—meaning “struggler with God”. The Hebrews would then be called the people of Israel after Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. One of his sons, named Joseph, ended up living in Egypt. (Joseph’s story is an interesting one for another time...) Joseph invited his family to join him to escape a horrible famine that covered all the land. While living in Egypt, the people of Israel grew into a large nation. After Joseph died, the King of Egypt named Pharaoh, feared Israel because of their great numbers. He treated them horribly and made Israel his slaves. Their slavery lasted 400 years. But God promised he would bless his people...

## Scene 1 ~ Deliverance and the Instructions

*Story from Genesis 37-50, Exodus 1-2, 7-12, 19-20*

God inspired a man named Moses to rescue the Israelites from slavery. He sent Moses to warn Pharaoh that terrible things would happen to the Egyptians if they didn’t release God’s people. Pharaoh was arrogant and didn’t listen, so God sent a series of horrible plagues to punish the Egyptians, but these plagues did not affect the Israelites.

God turned water to blood, filled the nation with frogs, gnats and flies, killed livestock, covered people in boils, destroyed the land with hail and locusts, and brought great darkness over the land.

In spite of these horrific events, Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. So God sent one more plague... a plague that would take the life of every firstborn person and animal in Egypt. But God provided a way for the firstborn of Israel to be spared.

He instructed them to take a first-born male lamb without defect, and sacrifice it to him without breaking any of its bones. Then, they were to take the blood from the lamb and put it on the doorposts of their homes. So the people of Israel did what God told them to do.

At midnight God sent the death angel through Egypt taking the life of all the firstborn, but passing over the homes that had blood on their doorposts. The Egyptians wept over this tragedy and begged the Israelites to leave, releasing them from their slavery. And now Israel, a large nation of over two million people, set out to return to the land God promised to Abraham.

But Pharaoh wanted revenge—he sent his armies after Israel to catch them and kill them. When the Israelites approached the Red Sea they thought they were trapped by the waters and would be caught by the Egyptians. But God split the waters so that the Israelites could cross the river on dry ground. When Pharaoh’s armies tried to cross behind them, God brought a huge wind that blew the waters back over them. The Egyptian Army was completely wiped out!

Two months after leaving Egypt, the Israelites set up camp at the bottom of Mount Sinai. God descended onto the mountain in fire and a thick cloud of smoke covered the mountain. God called Moses into his presence on the top of the mountain. There, God spoke to him saying, *“Tell my people this, ‘You saw how I carried you on eagles wings and rescued you from Egypt. Now if you obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured people—a kingdom of priests—set apart to represent me.’”*

When Moses came down the mountain he told the people what God said.

They all agreed, “We will do everything that God asks us to do. No really, we will follow all the commands.” After that God gave Moses instructions on how the people could return to following his ways and live in freedom, a life lived close to God and under his protection. God himself wrote them on stone tablets, and we call these instructions the Ten Commandments, which were God’s basic rules for life...

*“I am your God who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.  
Put me above everything else. Do not worship other things.  
Do not misuse or disrespect my name.  
Remember to set aside a day each week to rest and worship me.  
Honor your parents. Don’t murder or steal or lie.  
Do not sleep with any one but your husband or wife—be faithful.  
Don’t lust after what others have—be satisfied with what I give you.”*

God gave Moses more instructions, called laws, to give to Israel. These laws gave specific details about things like...

How to treat neighbors and enemies, how to handle conflicts, what is fair punishment, when to work and rest, when to celebrate and worship, and what offerings are acceptable to God. But the people did not want to live within God’s boundaries and rebelled again, calling these instructions a new kind of slavery. Even those who tried to obey these rules found they could not keep them perfectly.

Because God always does what is good, right and perfect, he could not overlook their sins and the ultimate punishment for sin was death. A life must be given to pay for each person’s disobedience. But God loved his people, so he provided a way for them to substitute the life of an innocent animal in place of their own.

People would bring pure animals to God, asking him to transfer their sins to the helpless animal. The animal was killed and its blood was given in place of the guilty person.

This system of sacrifice continued for hundreds of years. Sacrifices for sins had to be given day after day, year after year. And God accepted this, but only as a symbol of what was to come. He was preparing a final sacrifice that would pay for the world’s sins once and for all.

## **Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Deliverance and the Instructions**

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

### **1. How could the Israelites avoid the death of their firstborn?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *They had to kill a lamb that was firstborn, male, and perfect, and put its blood on the door to their house.*
- *They had to go inside, and hide behind the blood as the death angel passed through the land.*
- *God was the provider! Of course they would only do this if they believed God.*

### **2. In what other place in the Story have we seen that the life (and blood) of an innocent animal was given for the sake of covering another person’s sin?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *In the story of Adam and Eve when God made clothes for them from the skins of animals*

### **3. Why are the sacrifices and the blood important?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *God said that sin and rebellion must be paid for. The wages of sin is death.*
- *Payment for sin is life. Life for life. The covenant with Noah teaches us that the life is in the blood. Blood (a life given) is the only way to pay for sin.*
- *God holiness requires that sin and rebellion be dealt with or be removed from his presence.*

### **4. What is a covenant? What was the covenant that God was talking about? Who was it given to originally?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Abraham*
- *The people of Israel*
- *Review elements of the original covenant promises:  
"I will make you the father of a great nation—famous throughout history.  
I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.  
I will bless the entire earth through your descendants."*

### **5. How do you think the Israelites could keep their side of the covenant?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Follow God's commands.*
- *Obey him.*

### **6. Do you think God would remove his covenant if they did not obey him?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Partially—he may not bless them and protect them, but ultimately he chooses to save them to show how great he is, not basing this on how sinless they are.*

### **7. What do you think God meant by saying, "You will be a kingdom of priests"?**

- *They were to be his "display people" showing the world what he is like.*

### **8. What is the purpose of the Commandments and Laws?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *The Law was given to the people once they were rescued from slavery, showing them how to live in freedom, close to God. So that they could live in covenant with him.*

### **9. Which of these commandments do you think is the hardest to keep?**

- *You may want to guide the people to see that the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 10 Commandments actually sums up all the rest.*

### **10. What do God's Commandments and Laws show us about him?**

- *They show us that God wants to live in a close and grace-filled relationship with him*

### **11. What is the result of following in God's ways?**

## Scene 2 ~ The Kings and Prophets

*Story from Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings*

*Prophecies from 2 Samuel 7; Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, 61; Psalm 22; Micah 5; Zachariah 12*

After wandering the desert for forty years, God led the people of Israel to recapture the Promised Land from their enemies. God gave them many victories in battle, and completely honored his promises to them—but the people rejected him and worshipped false gods. This false worship led them into many other sins.

Because of their sin and disobedience, God removed his protection and allowed them to be overpowered and punished by foreign nations. When the people suffered they would come back to God and beg for his help and forgiveness. God once again forgave them and sent leaders, called *judges*, to lead them in defeating their enemies. (These are not like judges we have today, but more like generals). Battle after battle, Israel conquered their enemies at every border. In victory the people would worship God, but soon after that the people turned away from God again and lived their own way.

Unfortunately, this became a pattern from generation to generation... the people of Israel would come to God and worship him when they needed help, but when things were going well, they returned to worshipping other things. This was a time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Since kings ruled other nations, the people of Israel complained to God saying, *"We want a human king that we can see to rule over us."* God gave the people what they wanted and allowed them to be ruled by a succession of human kings that ultimately rebelled against God and his authority. Because of their rebellion, God removed his protection from Israel and allowed other nations to come in and conquer them. The Israelites were forced out of the Promised Land and many were taken away to be slaves once again.

During the time of these kings, God sent prophets to be his messengers. God spoke through the prophets, calling people to return to his ways and follow his commandments. The prophets warned Israel of what would happen if they continued to rebel against God. Prophets also foretold of a new covenant God would make with his people. They pointed people to a coming Messiah, an eternal king who would fulfill this covenant, save them and rule forever. God gave the prophets visions of what the Messiah would be like when he came.

Prophets like Isaiah foretold that...

*...a virgin would give birth to him in Bethlehem.*

*...he would be from the line of King David, (their greatest King) who was a descendent of Abraham.*

*...he would do no wrong, living a life without sin.*

*...he would be beaten, killed and buried in a rich man's tomb.*

*...his life would be made an offering for our sin.*

*...he would establish a kingdom like no other Israel had ever known.*

*...he would fulfill every promise God had made to Abraham, Isaac and their descendants.*

*...God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on him. His life will be made an offering for us.*

*...because of him, many will be made right with God.*

Despite the warnings of the prophets, the people of Israel stopped listening to God, and God did not speak to humans again for 400 hundred years...

## Scene 2 Dialogue ~ The Kings and Prophets

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

**12. What, to you, are the most striking characteristics of the history of the Israelites?**

**13. What is the pattern that the Israelites got into?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *They trusted in themselves instead of God, determining good and evil for themselves.*
- *When it got them into trouble they cried out to God... and he saved them.*
- *Then they went back to doing what was right in their own eyes. They followed other gods after all he had done for them.*

**14. In what ways can you relate to this pattern that the Israelites lived in?**

**15. They did what was right in their own eyes. What’s wrong with that?**

**16. How quick are you to question or submit to authority in your life? Are you quicker to assume your own authority? Why or why not?**

**17. Overall, how has it worked throughout the Story when humans have not obeyed God’s commands and lived for themselves?**

**18. Who saved them from slavery initially and then over and over again?**

- *God!*

**19. From all of the stories so far what have you learned about God?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- **God is holy—God will never allow evil to remain in his presence.**
  - *He always does what is good, right and perfect.*
  - *He never treats man unjustly.*
  - *He judged Lucifer and the fallen angels by casting them out of heaven.*
  - *He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden.*
  - *He cast Cain away from his presence by making him a wanderer.*
  - *He destroyed the earth with a flood.*
  - *He thoroughly judged Egypt.*
  - *He also judged Israel through enslavement and deportation when they followed false gods.*
- **He has all power.**
  - *He created everything including the angels.*
  - *He created man and fashioned the earth for him to live on.*
  - *He destroyed all men and animals by the flood.*
  - *He caused barren women to become pregnant.*

11:45 (10)

- *He destroyed the most powerful nation, Egypt, and the most powerful king, Pharaoh easily.*
- *He has complete control over his creation: He can turn the Nile to blood, cause storms greater than ever known in history, bring in insects to eat all the crops, cause day to be night, and even divide the waters of the Red Sea. He controls the wind and the waves!*
- *He controls the nations: When Israel disobeyed He could bring in a foreign power to enslave them.*
- **He knows all things.**
  - *He knew what Lucifer was thinking in his heart.*
  - *He knew that Adam and Eve had sinned.*
  - *He knew that Cain was about to do evil.*
  - *He knew the thoughts and intentions of every person on the earth.*
  - *He knew that Sarah would have a baby.*
  - *He knew that Joseph would save his family from drought.*
- **He is the source of all grace.**
  - *He did not destroy Lucifer.*
  - *He did not kill Adam and Eve instantly.*
  - *Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*
  - *He called Abraham and promised to make him a great nation and to bless all the nations of the world through him.*
  - *He gave Sarah a son in her old age.*
  - *He told Moses how the firstborn could be saved at the Passover.*
  - *He made a way for the Israelite's sins to be forgiven through the blood of sacrifices so they could dwell with Him.*
  - *He sent judges, kings, and prophets to give the people His word.*
  - *He promised a coming king who would establish save the people from all of their sins.*
- **God declares the "right-use-ness" of his people.**
- **He always keeps his promises.**
  - *He told Adam & Eve if they ate of the fruit he forbid that they would die.*
  - *He promised to bring a flood and he did.*
  - *He promised a son to Abraham and Sarah and they conceived.*
  - *He promised to make Abraham into a great nation and it came true.*
  - *He promised to deliver his people from Egypt and He did.*
  - *He promised to save the firstborn if the blood of a lamb was applied and He did.*
  - *He promised to give the descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan and He did.*
  - *He promised a coming messiah and savior... Will he come?*

11:55

Snack break (15)

## Scene 1 ~ The Birth of Jesus

*Story from Matthew 1—2 Luke 1—2*

400 years passed since God had spoken to his people. The Israelites, called Jews, had been under the control of other nations for hundred of years. They were now ruled by Rome, the most powerful empire that the world had ever known. The Jews were still waiting and hoping for a king who would come to save them and lead them into victory.

Finally, God sent an angel to a young woman named Mary in the town of Nazareth. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph who was a descendant of King David—a direct descendant of Abraham’s.

The angel told Mary that she would become pregnant and give birth to God’s Son—even though she was still a virgin! The angel revealed that this child in her was from the Holy Spirit and would become a king whose kingdom would never end!

Sure enough, the next year Mary gave birth to a son, whom they named Jesus, which means, “the Lord is salvation.” Not only did God reveal to Mary and Joseph that this boy was the long awaited Messiah king, but he revealed it to others, too. Angels shouted the news to shepherds who then ran into town to find the baby Jesus and tell everyone the amazing news! A star guided wise men from distant lands to come and worship and bring gifts to this newborn king. This birth was truly a miracle!

Jesus grew up in both height and wisdom, and was loved by God and everyone who knew him.

## Scene 1 Dialogue ~ The Birth of Jesus

*Remember this is a dialog, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.*

### 1. What was unique about Jesus’ birth?

### 2. Who was Jesus a descendant of? How might this be significant?

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *King David / Abraham*
- *The Covenant being fulfilled*
- *Prophecy fulfilled.*

### 3. What else did you hear in this story that reminds you of what the prophets said about the messiah?

- *Born of a virgin in Bethlehem / Nazareth*

### 4. Why might these things be important?

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *His human, virgin birth shows that he is a human. It was predicted by the prophets that this would be true of the Messiah.*

### 5. What does Jesus name mean? — The Lord is Salvation

*Guide the conversation toward defining...*

- *Lord. Lord of who...what?*
- *What is salvation? For who, from what? To what?*

12:20 (10)

## Scene 2 ~ Jesus' Baptism

Story from... Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1

God sent a messenger named John to tell people to get ready because the Messiah was coming. John was a distant cousin of Jesus, born just six months before him. He was a rugged man who lived in the wilderness, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore clothes made out of camel hair. John boldly challenged the Jews, *"Don't just say that you love God—prove it with your life. Turn from your sins and turn to God!"*

He became known as John the Baptizer as he dunked those who had confessed their sins in the Jordan River. Baptism was a symbol of being washed clean from your sins and choosing a new way of living. When Jewish leaders asked John if he was the Messiah, he responded, *"No! But someone is coming soon who is far greater than me—I'm not worthy to untie his sandals or even to be his slave. You see... I baptize with water, but he will baptize with God's Spirit!"*

Soon after that Jesus came to be baptized. When John saw him he said, *"I'm the one who needs to be baptized by you."* But Jesus insisted, so John baptized him in front of the crowds. When Jesus came out of the water, God's Spirit came down from the sky—it looked like a dove floating down and resting on him. Then a voice from heaven said, *"You are my son who I love—you bring me great joy!"*

## Scene 2 Dialogue ~ Jesus' Baptism

**6. What do we learn about John from this scene?**

**7. What was John's message?**

**8. Why were people coming to be baptized by John?**

*What did the Story say...?*

**9. What do you think is significant about God saying to Jesus, "This is my son who I love...?"**

- *Declaring Jesus is his son! Son of God!!!*

*If the dialog doesn't naturally get to the word "identity," just add something like this:*

***It looks like God is affirming Jesus' identity publically for everyone.***



## Scene 3 ~ Jesus' Temptation

Story from Matthew 4; Luke 4

Immediately after being baptized, Jesus was led by God's Spirit to go into the wilderness. There, Satan tempted him for forty days and forty nights. During that entire time Jesus didn't eat anything and became very hungry. Satan tried to deceive Jesus saying, "If you're God's Son, why don't you turn these rocks into loaves of bread to eat?"

Jesus answered him, "No! When God spoke to Moses he said, 'People need more than bread to live—they must find their life in the words of God.'"

Then Satan took Jesus to the top of the tallest building in Jerusalem and said, "If you are God's Son, jump off! Your sacred writings say, 'God will send his angels to catch you and you won't even hit the ground!'"

Jesus replied, "Moses also wrote, 'Do not even try to test God.'"

Next, Satan took Jesus to the peak of a huge mountain. He showed him all of the nations of the world in their brilliance. He said, "I will give you all of this—anything you want—if you'll kneel down and worship me."

Jesus responded, "Get away from me, Satan! It's commanded, 'Put God above everything else and only worship him!'"

Then Satan went away and angels came and took care of Jesus. At this time he was about thirty years old. Throughout Jesus' life he never sinned or rebelled against God. He always chose to do what was good and right and perfect.

### Scene 3 Dialogue ~ Jesus' Temptation

#### 10. In your own words, what was Satan tempting Jesus with?

*There are clues to this answer in how Jesus responds to each of Satan's temptations...*

- *To trust in his own provision for himself—but God is the true provider  
God is good—so we don't have to look elsewhere*
- *To test his faith/relationship with God—but God alone is trustworthy  
God is great—so we don't have to be in control*
- *To gain Jesus' worship, away from God — but God alone is worthy to be worshipped  
(where in the Story have we seen Satan try and do this before?)  
God is glorious—so we don't have to fear others*

#### 11. How did Jesus respond in this scene to Satan's temptations?

**How is it different from Adam?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Resisted, and quoted God's words to Satan*

#### 12. What is Satan challenging when he asks Jesus... "If you're the son of God...do this"?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- *His Identity!*

**13. Where have we seen Satan challenge a person and tempt them before?**

**Did he challenge Eve's identity too?**

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- *"God just knows that you will be like him if you eat..." They were created in God's image! To be like him!*
- *Satan's scheme is always the same here—twist God's original words around and challenge our identity in God.*

**14. What are your thoughts about the part of the Story where it said:**

**"Jesus never sinned or rebelled against God. He always chose to do what was good and right and perfect?"**

**15. From what we have seen and learned about humans so far, have we ever seen this before?**

**16. Have humans done well at managing good and evil, right and wrong?**

**But Jesus is a human...how could this be possible!? Only God does what is good, right and perfect. Only God has the ability to manage good and evil perfectly. Jesus would have to be God. He is God's son—both God and man.**

***Share this... And yet, even though he was sinless, Jesus was baptized to identify with sinful humanity.***

**17. How well do you do at always choosing what is good and right and perfect?**

**18. What do you think enabled Jesus to do this—live this way perfectly?**

## **Scene 4 ~ Disciples**

12:45 (15)

*Story from... Matthew 4; Mark 1; Luke 5*

Not long after that, John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, *"Look! There is God's Passover Lamb—he'll take away the sins of the world! God showed me he's the Messiah we've been waiting for—God's own son!"*

As Jesus walked along the sea he told some of John's followers, *"Come and follow me!"*

From then on Jesus surrounded himself with a few close followers, called disciples, showing them how to live in the ways of God. Then Jesus traveled throughout the area meeting in market places, homes and Jewish synagogues, teaching people God's ways. He brought a new message to them saying, *"The Kingdom of God has come—now turn from your sins and turn to God!"*

Full of the Spirit's power, Jesus healed people with every kind of sickness and disease. News spread quickly about him and huge crowds began following him wherever he went. People traveled from miles away to be near him and see the amazing miracles he performed.

## Scene 4 Dialogue ~ Disciples

**19. Why did John say, “Look! There is God’s Passover Lamb”?**

**20. What do you think the people thought of when he said this?**

**What are the implications of this claim about who Jesus is?**

**What details do you remember about the first Passover lamb from our previous stories?**

**21. Where in the Story today did we see God’s Spirit (the Holy Spirit) mentioned?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Mary becomes pregnant through the work of the Spirit*
- *At Jesus’ baptism*
- *The HS led Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted*
- *Jesus did his miracle by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**22. Where do you think Jesus got his power to do miracles?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *The Spirit of God that had descended on him—The Holy Spirit.*

**23. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from all of this?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *The Father sent the Spirit.*
- *The Spirit has power and leads Jesus*

**24. What do we learn about Jesus from this story (all four scenes)?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Jesus humbled himself.*
- *He is God and man.*
- *God called him his son who he loves.*
- *He never rebelled against God, living a sinless life.*
- *He has amazing powers.*
- *People wanted to be near him.*
- *He taught in new ways*

1:00

Lunch break (45)

*Story from Matthew 9, 12; Mark 2; Luke 5, 11; John 5*

## **Scene 1 ~ Healing a Paralyzed Man**

Crowds continued to surround Jesus everywhere he went. Once, when he was teaching in a house where he was staying, so many people came to hear him that the house was completely packed. There wasn't room for one more person—even outside of the door!

Four men brought their paralyzed friend who was lying on a mat to see Jesus, believing he would heal him. But the only way they could get him in the house was to climb up on the roof, dig a hole through the clay tiles and lower him down! Jesus was impressed with their effort and faith. He told the paralyzed man, *"Don't worry... your sins are forgiven!"*

Some religious leaders, called Pharisees, were watching and listening to Jesus. The Pharisees were a powerful group of Jewish teachers. In addition to the laws given to Moses, they created their own set of strict rules on how to follow God.

They said to each other, *"Who does this man think he is? No one can forgive sins but God!"*

But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, *"Why are you offended? Would you rather I would've just said 'pick up your mat and walk'? I will prove to you that I have the authority on earth to forgive sins."*

Then Jesus told the paralyzed man, *"Now get up—take your mat and walk home—you are healed."*

The man was no longer paralyzed! He jumped up and pushed his way out the door and went home. Everyone there was amazed and thanked God saying, *"We've never seen anything like this before!"*

## **Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Healing a Paralyzed Man**

- 1. What do we learn about Jesus in this story?**
  - *He can forgive sins*
- 2. But who alone can forgive sin?**
  - *God*

Story from Matthew 8; Mark 4,5

## Scene 1 ~ Calming the Storm

Evening came, and Jesus was exhausted from teaching all day. He asked his disciples to get into a boat so they could cross the lake and get away from the crowds. As they took off, Jesus went to the back of the boat, put his head on a cushion and fell asleep. All of sudden, a terrible storm came up with strong winds and crashing waves. No matter how hard the disciples tried, they couldn't keep the boat from filling with water.

The disciples ran to the back of the boat in a panic to wake Jesus, shouting, *"Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"*

Jesus awoke, stood up, and said to the wind and waves, *"Quiet! Be still."*

As soon as he said this, the wind stopped blowing and the sea became calm.

Then, Jesus asked them, *"Why are you so afraid? Don't you believe in me yet?"*

The disciples just sat there—filled with wonder!

They asked each other, *"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

## Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Calming the Storm

### 1. Which of our other stories talk about the wind and the waves?

**What happen in those stories? Who was in control?**

- *When Israel crossed the Red Sea and God brought a strong east wind to open the sea and returned it by bringing a strong west wind in order to kill the army of Pharaoh. Noah and the ark...*

### 2. What do we learn about Jesus from this scene? Who is this man?

## Scene 2 ~ Recognized by Demons

When Jesus reached the other side of the lake, a wild man, filled with demons ran towards him from a nearby cemetery. This man had been chained to some of the tombs to keep him from hurting people, but he snapped the chains from his wrists and ankles. Now he wandered around all day and night, screaming and hitting himself with stones. No one could control him because he was too strong!

As he approached Jesus said to him, *"Come out of this man you demons!"*

The man fell down in front of Jesus and screamed, *"Why are you bothering me Jesus, Son of God? Please, don't torture me!"*

Then Jesus asked, *"What is your name?"*

*"Legion,"* the man replied, *"because there are many of us inside of this man."*

Over and over the demons begged Jesus to not send them far away. There happened to be a heard of pigs feeding on a hillside nearby. *"Send us into those pigs!"* the demons pleaded.

Jesus replied, *"All right, go!"* And the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs.

The entire heard of two thousand pigs immediately rushed down the steep hillside into the lake where they drowned!

Those who witnessed what had happened ran into town to tell everyone they could find. Soon, the entire town came out to see what had happened. They were astonished when they saw the man fully clothed and no longer insane! Then the crowd begged Jesus to go away and leave them alone.

So Jesus and his followers went back to their boat. As they were leaving, the man who had been filled with demons asked if he could go with them.

Jesus said to him, *"You need to go back to your friends and tell them the great things the Lord has done for you and how he showed you mercy."*

So the man went and visited towns all over that region, telling people about the great things Jesus had done. Everyone he talked to was amazed by what had happened.

## Scene 2 Dialogue ~ Recognized by Demons

3. **What do we find out about the man who met up with Jesus in this scene? (Describe everything that comes to mind)**
4. **What are demons? Where did they come from?**
  - *Fallen angels, created by God.*
5. **How did God treat the demons in our first story?**
  - *God judged them and cast them out of his presence.*
6. **How do you think the demons knew who Jesus was? Why were they afraid of him?**

### **Scene 3 ~ Power over Death**

When Jesus and his disciples went back across the lake, a large crowd was already waiting for him on the beach.

One of the local Jewish leaders named Jairus (JAY-rus) ran to Jesus and fell down at his feet. He begged Jesus to heal his twelve year-old daughter. *"My little girl is very sick and about to die,"* he cried. *"Please come and heal her so she can live."*

Jesus went with Jairus towards his house and the crowd followed behind them. Along the way some of Jarius' friends stopped him saying, *"We just came from your house. Your daughter has died. There's no use bringing the teacher to your house now."*

But Jesus ignored them and said to Jairus, *"Don't be afraid—just trust me."* Then Jesus told the crowd to stay back, and he only let three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, come with them.

When they arrived at Jarius' house there was a crowd of people inside weeping loudly. Jesus asked them, *"Why are you crying? The girl is not dead—she's sleeping."* The crowd laughed at him. Then Jesus sent everyone outside except for the girl's parents and the disciples that were with him. When they went into the girl's room, Jesus took the girl's hand and said, *"Little girl, get up!"*

Immediately the girl jumped out of bed and began walking around! Her parents were absolutely amazed! Jesus told them to give her something to eat, and asked them not to tell anyone about what they'd just seen.

### **Scene 3 Dialogue ~ Power over Death**

- 7. Why do you think that people doubted Jesus in this scene?**
- 8. What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?**

## Scene 1 ~ Kingdom Message

Jesus continued to teach people, "The Kingdom of God has come—turn from your sins and turn to God!"

One day, he climbed up a hill with a group of his closest followers. They sat down together and Jesus began to teach them about God's Kingdom.

He said, *"God blesses those who realize their need for him;  
the humble and poor, the gentle and merciful—the Kingdom of God belongs to them.  
God blesses the pure in heart and those who hunger and thirst to be with Him.  
You'll be blessed when you are hated, mocked and excluded because you are my followers.  
Be happy about it—you will get great rewards in heaven!"*

Then Jesus went on to teach about God's laws that were given to Moses.

Jesus said, "Don't think I came to get rid of the laws of Moses and the writings of the Prophets. I have come to fulfill them! God's laws are alive and will last forever—live by them and show others the way. That's how you'll find honor in the Kingdom."

He went on to teach, "The laws and commands tell you not to murder, but I say if you hate someone or insult them, you are just as guilty as a murderer. Your words and actions bring judgment on you." "The laws also tell us to never have sex with someone else's spouse. But I say anyone who even looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart."

He also taught them, "If someone steals your shirt from you, offer them your coat too. Live generously! Love your enemies. Anyone can love their friends, but you are to love the unlovable. You must live differently, doing what is good, right and perfect—just like God your Father."

The people were amazed at Jesus' teaching; he had real power and authority—unlike their teachers of the law.

Later the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When is this 'Kingdom' that you are teaching about going to come?" Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God is not something you can predict. People will not say, 'here it is,' or 'there it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you."

## Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Kingdom Message

### 1. In your own words, what is Jesus teaching his followers in this scene?

*The Pharisees had created a way for humans to be accepted by God by their actions. Jesus took the commands and laws that God gave Moses and revealed the inner attitudes behind the actions—showing that outward actions are not enough. Our heart is more important than our actions to God.*

### 2. What do you think Jesus meant by saying "I have come to fulfill the laws of Moses and the writings of the Prophets?"



## Scene 2 ~ Parables of the Kingdom

Jesus continued to teach about the Kingdom of God using short stories that had powerful meanings, called parables.

He said, *“The Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed that is planted in a field. This seed may be small at first, but it grows into a large tree where birds can come and find shelter.”*

Jesus told dozens of stories like this to the crowds. He said the Kingdom is...

*Like a hidden treasure buried in a field — worth diligently searching for.*

*Like yeast spread in a large ball of dough — just a little will change a lot.*

*Like a precious pearl — worth trading everything for.*

*Like a great feast — where the poor and the outcast all get invited, and on and on...*

People were amazed at Jesus' teaching and wisdom. They understood some of these pictures, but others remained a mystery to them.

A young man came up to Jesus and asked, *“What good things must I do to get into the Kingdom?”*

Jesus replied, *“God is the only one who is good. Follow his commandments.”*

The man said, *“I have obeyed his commands—what else must I do?”*

Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him and said, *“Go and sell everything you have and give the money to the poor. Then, come and follow me.”*

When the man heard this, he went away very sad because he didn't want give up his great wealth and possessions.

Jesus told his disciples, *“It's very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God—it's easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle!”*

*“Then who in the world can enter the Kingdom?”* asked his disciples.

Jesus replied, *“If you try on your own you won't make it. But if you rely on God, everything is possible! The entrance to the Kingdom of God is narrow—only a few will find it. But the road that leads to destruction is very wide and many will chose this way and live only for themselves.”*

## Scene 2 Dialogue ~ Parables of the Kingdom

- 3. Why do you think Jesus taught in parables?**
- 4. What do you think the Kingdom of God is? What does it look like? Where is it? Why is it so hard to describe?**
- 5. What kind of king / kingdom do you think the Jewish people were hoping for? What did they want to conquer?**
- 6. What kind of kingdom was Jesus establishing? What do you think he was he looking to conquer?**

### **Scene 3 ~ Jesus & Nicodemus**

One night a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, *“Rabbi, we know you were sent by God to teach us. Your miracles haven proven to us that God is with you.”*

Jesus replied, *“You’re right—but unless someone is born a second time they will never understand God’s Kingdom.”*

*“What do you mean?”* Nicodemus questioned, *“How can someone who is fully grown climb back inside their mother and be born a second time?”*

Jesus answered him, *“The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they have been born a second time by God’s Spirit. Humans can only give human life, but God’s Spirit gives new life in the Kingdom.”*

*“How can this happen!?”* Nicodemus asked.

Jesus replied, *“You are a respected Jewish teacher, but you don’t know this simple truth? If you won’t believe me when I teach you about everyday things, how will you believe me when I tell you about God’s Kingdom?”*

*“What I am telling you is true. God showed his great love for people by sending me—his only son—to this world. Anyone who believes in me and lives in my ways will find life that is complete and eternal! He sent me here to save people—not to judge them. Those who want to live in sin and darkness will reject me and bring God’s judgment on themselves. But those who want to live in God’s ways will trust me and live forever!”*

### **Scene 3 Dialogue ~ Jesus & Nicodemus**

- 7. Why do you think what Jesus was teaching was hard to understand for Nicodemus (or anyone)?**
- 8. How does someone “enter the Kingdom” according to these three scenes?**
- 9. What do we learn about Jesus from these stories?**

### Scene 1 ~ Death and Resurrection

Story from Matthew 26—28; Mark 14—16; Luke 22—24; John 13,17—20

Jesus and his disciples traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. Everywhere he went he had compassion on people and met their needs. The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders were becoming increasingly upset with Jesus and his claims.

He continued to tell people that he could forgive their sins. This enraged the Jewish leaders—they saw this as the ultimate disrespect to God. They looked for ways to trap Jesus into saying something they could arrest him for, but Jesus was too wise for them.

Many of his stories pointed out the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. Jesus said, *“When the Pharisees and teachers share with you God’s commands, listen to them—but don’t follow their example. They don’t live out what they teach.”*

The High Priest met with these leaders to discuss capturing Jesus and putting him to death. *“We can’t arrest him during Passover,”* they agreed, *“or it will create a huge riot.”*

Jesus and his 12 disciples met together in a home to celebrate the Passover. During the meal Jesus picked up some bread, thanked God for it, and broke it into pieces. Giving it to his disciples he said, *“Take this and eat it, this is my body given for you.”*

Then Jesus picked up a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He gave them the cup and said, *“All of you, drink this. It is my blood given for you—a new covenant between God and his people. It is poured out to forgive the sins of many. Remember me when you continue to eat and drink these things together.”*

Jesus told them, *“When you see what happens tonight you will all abandon me. It is part of God’s plan that I will be betrayed and die. But don’t fear, I will rise again from the dead!”* He knew that his disciple Judas would betray him, bringing Jewish soldiers to capture him later that night when no one was around.

After the meal, when it was dark, Jesus went to pray. Filled with pain and sorrow, he pleaded with God, *“Father, if there is another way besides my death, please let that happen—but I will do whatever you ask.”*

Just as he had finished praying, Judas showed up with an armed mob. He greeted Jesus with a kiss—a sign to show the guards which one they should arrest.

Jesus said to them, *“Am I a dangerous criminal that you need weapons to capture me?”*

*Why didn’t you arrest me in the Temple where I’ve been teaching everyday?*

*No! This is part of God’s plan, just as the prophets predicted long ago.”*

When the guards arrested Jesus and dragged him away, the disciples ran away and hid. The guards beat Jesus and brought him before the Jewish leaders for questioning.

They asked, *“Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?”* Jesus answered, *“I am, and you will see me seated next to God in power—coming back on the clouds of heaven.”*

When Jesus said this, the High Priest tore his clothing in horror and said, *“Any man who claims to be God must be put to death.”* Then they slapped Jesus in the face and spit on him.

Jesus was brought to the Roman governor, Pilate, since Jews could not execute anyone without official approval. The Jewish leaders stirred up the crowds and pressured Pilate to have Jesus put to death. They shouted, *"CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!"*

Pilate feared a riot would break out, so he handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. Crucifixion was the most cruel and humiliating way to die. Jesus was brutally beaten and whipped by the soldiers. They put a crown of sharp thorns on his head and a purple robe around his shoulders. *"Hail the King of the Jews!"* they laughed. All night, the Roman soldiers continued to beat Jesus and mock him.

When morning came, they led Jesus to a place called Skull Hill. Like a criminal, Jesus was nailed to a heavy wooden cross between two thieves. Hanging there, he cried out, *"Father, please forgive them, they don't know what they're doing."*

At noon, darkness filled the skies—blocking out the sun for three hours. Suddenly, the thick curtain hanging in the Temple tore down the middle! At that moment Jesus shouted, *"Father! I give you my life... it is finished."*

Then Jesus breathed his last breath and died.

The soldiers broke the legs of the criminals crucified next to Jesus to speed up their death. When they found that Jesus was already dead, they didn't break his legs. To be sure, one of the soldiers stabbed him in the side with a spear—blood and water poured out.

Late Friday afternoon, Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in long strips of cloth, and buried in a rich man's tomb. A large stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb and Roman guards were posted to make sure nothing happened to his body.

***(Pause for a moment...)***

Early on Sunday morning, some of the women who followed Jesus went to prepare his body for burial. When they arrived at the tomb, they saw the stone rolled away and the soldiers were gone!

Suddenly, two angels appeared. They said, *"Why are you surprised? You are looking for Jesus, but he is not here, he's been raised from the dead."*

The women were excited but afraid and hurried to tell the disciples the amazing news. Some of them ran back to the tomb and looked inside for themselves...

Jesus was not there!

In fact, Jesus appeared to his disciples many times over the next 40 days. They touched him, saw him eat food and perform miracles again. Jesus reminded them of his teaching about the kingdom and opened their minds to understand how the whole Story has led up to him. Over 500 people saw him alive.

## Scene 1 Dialogue ~ Death and Resurrection

2:40 (30)

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

**1. Why was Jesus going to Jerusalem? What do we know about this celebration?**

**2. How does the Passover story we heard earlier remind you of Jesus’ death?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *Jesus is the Passover Lamb that takes away the sins of the world...*

**3. Why do you think the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus?**

**4. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Take this and eat it, this is my body given for you” and “...drink this. It is my blood given for you—a new covenant between God and his people?”**

**5. What was God’s Old Covenant with his people? What do you think this “New Covenant” is?**

- *The covenant was originally given to Abraham...I will be your God and you will be my people.*
- *I will be your God AND I will enable you to be my people. To keep your end of the covenant. God will keep both sides of the new covenant.*

**6. How did Jesus fulfill the prophet’s predictions about the coming Messiah?**

*Use this question only if you have time or people are questioning Jesus being the Messiah.*

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *He would fulfill every promise God made to Abraham, Isaac and their descendants.*
- *He will be beaten, whipped, and wounded*
- *He will be put on trial and thrown in prison.*
- *His hands and feet would be pierced.*
- *He will be killed like a criminal and then buried in a rich man’s tomb.*
- *God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on him.*
- *His life will be made an offering for us.*
- *Because of Him, many will be made right with God.*

**9. Do you remember what Jesus said when he was hanging on the cross?**

*You may have to remind them...*

- *Father forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing!*

**10. How could Jesus possibly forgive those who were killing him?**

**11. Do you believe that God can forgive what you have done in your life?**

**12. Do you believe he has forgiven you?**

**13. How is Jesus being raised from the dead significant? What does it show us about him?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward:*

- *He conquered death—the results of human sin and rebellion! He didn’t just exchange his life for ours to atone for our sins, he also secured new life for us!*

**14. From what we now know of Jesus and what he taught, how could humans be set free from the penalty of sin... set free from death and separation from God?**

- *By putting their faith and trust in the work of Jesus' death and resurrection on behalf of them. To allow Jesus atone for their sins and exchange his righteousness for their unrighteousness.*
- *To move from a life lived determining right or wrong for ourselves and turning to God, through Jesus, trusting in his ways for our life.*

## **EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE**

3:10 (10)

We talked earlier about the Kingdom of God, and that Jesus was the perfect king, the only king that always did was good, right and perfect.

Another word that the Bible uses for Jesus as king is Lord. In fact, the word LORD is used thousands of times referring to God and Jesus throughout the Bible.

**Let's review, what we have seen that Jesus is in fact king or Lord over?**

- **LORD OVER DEMONS**  
*(All Authority/Dominion in Heaven and Earth is given to me (Matthew 28:18))*  
**Where do you see that in the Story?**  
**What does his Lordship over the demons mean for our lives?**
- **LORD OVER HUMANITY**  
*(Jesus was the "Perfect Adam", the only perfect man!)*  
**Where do you see that in the Story?**  
**What does his Lordship over the humanity mean for our lives?**
- **LORD OVER RIGHTEOUSNESS**  
*(Because he perfectly did what we do not do (obey and submit to the Father), he sits as the righteous Judge—he declares what is righteous and is alone perfectly righteous so that makes him the only perfect Judge as to right and wrong—what is righteous.)*  
**Where do you see that in the Story?**  
**What does his Lordship over the righteousness mean for our lives?**  
  
**What kind of judge is Jesus ?**  
*Gentle, loving, forgiving savior. But absolute—sin will be judged by Jesus' words, commands.*
- **LORD OVER SALVATION**  
*(Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6))*  
**Where do you see that in the Story?**  
**What does his Lordship over the salvation mean for our lives?**
- **LORD OVER SIN & DEATH**  
*(In Him we can overcome sin and death.)*

***Where do you see that in the Story?***

***What does his Lordship over the sin and death mean for our lives?***

***We see that **Jesus is Lord over ALL** things and people!***

**Which area of Jesus' Lordship that we just discussed is hardest for you to submit to?**

The key question before us then is:

# Is Jesus Lord over your life?

**Do you submit to his reign  
and accept his righteousness in exchange for your unrighteousness?**

This can begin today, you can receive his forgiveness for a life of self-rule and ask Jesus to be Lord and King in your life from this point forward. Ask him to fill you with his own Spirit that will lead you into all the ways of truth.

## Scene 1

*Story from Matthew 9; Mark 2; Luke 5, 11, 17; Acts 3; 1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 21*

In the weeks that followed Jesus' death, he appeared to his disciples many times and was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses. Quickly, the news about his resurrection spread throughout the land.

One of Jesus' disciples named Thomas said, *"I won't believe he is alive unless I can put my fingers into the holes where his hands were nailed to the cross."*

A few days later, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said to Thomas, *"Put your fingers here—feel the hole in my hand. Put your hand into the wound on my side."*

Thomas shouted, *"It is you, Jesus—my God!"*

Then Jesus said, *"I will bless those even more who haven't seen, but still believe!"*

Soon after that, Jesus met with his disciples over a meal. He said, *"John baptized you in water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with God's Spirit. This will give you power to live in my ways and tell the entire world about me."*

Jesus commanded them, *"Go! Make disciples all over the world. Teach them to walk in my ways and obey me. I am leaving now to be with my father in heaven, but you will never be alone. God's Spirit will come and live inside of you—giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth."*

As the disciples watched, Jesus went up into the sky, disappearing in the clouds right in front of them!  
(Pause)

A few weeks later, a group of 120 of Jesus' followers gathered to pray together in Jerusalem.

All of sudden, they heard a loud sound—like a roaring windstorm—that filled the house where they were meeting. Each of them was filled with God's Spirit and started speaking in languages that were not their own! They went out into the street and began to tell people about the great things that Jesus had done.

At that time, Jews from all over the world were living in Jerusalem. This roaring sound was heard throughout the entire city, and a large crowd had gathered outside the house to see what was going on.

When the people heard Jesus' followers speaking, they said, *"How can this be? They're from Galilee, but they're speaking in our own languages. This is amazing!"*

One of Jesus' disciples, named Peter, stepped forward to explain to the crowds what was happening. He said, *"This is part of God's prophecy being fulfilled. We are eyewitnesses of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the true Messiah!"*

Then Peter explained how Jesus had fulfilled everything the prophets said about the Messiah. He told the crowd, *"Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God. In Jesus, you will find forgiveness—"*



*he is the final sacrifice everyone's sin. This is God's new covenant offered not just to the Jews, but to all who want to be part of God's family."*

That day, thousands believed what Peter had said and turned from their sins to follow Jesus. They were baptized and became a part of God's family—once again empowered to live out God's promise to be a blessing to all people.

God's new covenant was not written on tablets of stone like before, but on the hearts and minds of his people, so they would always know how to live in his ways.

These followers of Jesus were deeply committed to God and each other... sharing everything they had, praying, learning God's ways together, and helping anyone in need—all with great joy and generosity. Daily, they ate together to honor and remember Jesus' life given for them.

They saw God do amazing things through them—miracles and healings—as he added people to their group each day.

This was the beginning of what the Bible calls the Church—a community of people all over the world who, because of Jesus, once again enjoy a life that is full and complete—as they follow in the ways of God.

*We can join this great story... the story can continue with us!*

**(pause)**

Jesus promised to come back one day, saying, *"When I return again, everyone will know I am here. It'll be like a huge flash of lighting that fills the sky!"*

Jesus will return to destroy all evil, sin and rebellion. There will be no more sickness, pain, or death—He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. The world as we know it will be gone forever.

God will once again live with his people and enjoy a close relationship. Humans will receive new bodies and live on a new earth, restored back to the way God designed it. God's Kingdom will come in fullness, and everything will live under his rule.

As God's community on earth, we wait with great anticipation for this amazing day.

*Until then, may we live in God's ways, giving people a glimpse of what life is like in the coming Kingdom.*

## ***Scene 1 Dialogue ~ The Church***

- 1. Do you think Jesus was really raised from the dead?**
- 2. What do you hear in this story that makes you believe this?**
- 3. What was Jesus' command right before leaving his disciples?**
- 4. Is this command also for us today?**
- 5. What is a disciple? How do you make a disciple?**

**6. What did he say about God's Spirit?**

- *God's Spirit will come and live inside of you - giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth.*

## **CONCLUDING THE STORY & DIALOGUE**

3:35 (10)

*We've spent several hours looking at this story...it is the true Story. This is a story about a Holy God that has pursued sinful and rebellious humans with the desire of restoring them to a close and loving relationship.*

**1. If that is NOT your story... what is your story?**

**Is the story primarily about you or about God?**

**Which story do you currently live by?**

*(Pause here for a moment to reflect)*

**7. How has the Story affected your heart today?**

**8. Who do you know that desperately needs to see life in light of God's Story?**

# STORY TRAINING

3:45 (15)

Given that this is the Fast Track, the bulk of the training is experiencing the Story and seeing it modeled, but we'll take a few brief moments to lift the lid a little bit on why we do the Story, how it works and how to do it well.

## THE WHY

Storying is sticky... We speak in story... We're born oral learners... Story indirectly challenges worldview...

¾ of the Bible is story... Jesus, Stephen, Paul told stories to summarize and illuminate scripture...

## THE HOW

Know the whole Story well and nearly memorize the current narrative.

Create an atmosphere that is welcoming, open to learning through questions and dialogue

Keep driving people back to the Story for their answers—it's part of discipleship to train people to look to God's Word for all their answers.

Throw questions back out to the group to facilitate dialogue. Don't make it a Q&A session.

Only discuss what's been revealed in the narrative—keeps the playing field level...

Pray and trust the Spirit...

At the end, hand out *Story of God Training: Using Narrative and Dialogue in Making Disciples*

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<sup>1</sup> *American Story* slide idea from our friend Jeremy Pryor, <http://jeremypryor.wordpress.com>

4:00

*Stick around, chat, answer questions, go home...*