

WRAP-UP

Over the next several Sundays we will be exploring the “big-picture” story of the Bible. Hopefully, you will be reminded (or discover for the first time) how you fit in to God’s “plan for the ages.” As you continue through the series, pay attention to how God is working around you and through you to make you part of his story. Look for ways to learn from those who have gone before (in the Bible and in your groups) how they became more aware of this reality. Look for ways to connect more directly to God, to people of previous and future generations, and to people of other social and ethnic backgrounds. Discover how they experience God in ways different than you do.

MEMORY VERSE

“... for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.” (1Peter 2:9-10 NLT)

PRAYER

As a group, ask God to show you —this week—how you are fitting in to His story. Ask Him to show you ways you can show others the “goodness of God.”

Show one another God’s goodness by praying for one another’s specific needs. Record them here so you can continue to pray this week:

Live a Better Story

Week #1

INTRODUCTION

What makes a story significant in our life? Isn’t it that we find ourselves identifying with the characters; their dilemmas, their turmoil, their challenges, their fears, their triumphs, their discoveries? We often take from the story an insight, a principle, or a perspective: something that helps us live our lives better.

All the more when we see ourselves in the story of the Bible. There we learn how to handle life’s situations we may encounter. We also discover our part in God’s universal divine plan, something that brings perspective to our existence and that draws us into more meaningful relationships with all of the people around us.

This week we launch a new series called “Live a Better Story.” The goal is to help us find more meaning in our personal stories as we better understand how they fit into God’s “big story.”

ICE BREAKER (Optional—8 min)

What is a favorite story you remember from your childhood? Why is it important to you?

1Peter 2:9-10 (NLT) But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God’s mercy.”

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 min)

1. The story makes sense of our experience.

“Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people.”

Outside of God’s family we have no identity. We don’t know where we belong. But within God’s family we have a series of shared experiences that tie us together as “God’s people.” It makes us “of the same stock.”

Once we understand the story of the Bible, we see ourselves with a larger narrative and our life is “contextualized.” We have answers to the “big” questions of life: “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” and “Where am I headed?”

In addition, within the smaller biblical narratives we can gain insight into how to handle the different struggles we have: e.g, how to overcome failure and guilt, or how to restore broken relationships.

How has your understanding the “big” story brought perspective to your personal experience? Can you give an example of how a specific Bible story has helped you in one of your life situations?

2. The story brings purpose to our work.

“As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he has called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”

Romans 8:28 (NLT) And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

Genesis 1:1-4 (NLT) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.

One of God’s purposes for our lives is to show others his goodness. Of course we are able to do this because we have experienced that goodness first hand. Peter expresses this in terms of having come out of darkness and into light. In God’s

original creation, he takes that which is dark, formless and empty and from it brings order, fullness and light. What he did physically in creation he does metaphorically in our lives. He brings order out of chaos and meaning out of emptiness.

How has God brought order out of the chaos of your life? Can you give examples of how he has made light out of darkness? How has he made your life “good”?

3. The story brings us into relationship with others.

“...for you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s very own possession.”

One of the key aspects of God’s story is that it calls us into both an individual and a collective experience. Peter calls us “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” Note that—apart from the tremendous significance in each of these terms—they are all collective. God’s story connects us to others. It is a story that links us to both past and future generations. It is a story that reaches across social and racial barriers to unite people.

2 Timothy 1:3 (NLT) Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did.

Deuteronomy 6:5-6 (NLT) And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children.

Revelation 5:9 (NLT) For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

In your own experience, how has being part of God’s story connected you to the past generation and the future generation? Share a time when you felt like you were part of the bigger family “from every tribe and language and people and nation?”