

# THE STORY

The Beautiful The Horrible

The Irrational Pursuit of God





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# Group Life

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Welcome to community. We are made for life together but life together can get messy so here are some suggestions to make the time in your group fun, vulnerable and life-changing.

## **Be Attentive**

We live in a loud and distracted world full of social media, text messaging and selfies. For the short time in your group, silence your phone and put it away. When someone is sharing, lean in to listen and ask questions. When you share, keep on topic and seek to be concise so that others can also share. Avoid interrupting or dominating the conversation. We want to learn from one another and we learn the most when we listen.

## **Come Prepared**

The emphasis of this time is to know God and to grow in our life with him. When everyone does the homework, the discussion promises to be rich and deep. Pray before you come in anticipation of what God will do in and through your group.

## **What Group Time Is and Is Not**

We want to create a safe place for everyone to be vulnerable but also confident that what they share will not leave the group. This is a time to grow in love for God and for one another. This is not a time to fix one another or give unsolicited advice.

Give feedback that is: affirming (“thanks for trusting us with your story”), empathetic (“I’ve done the same thing” and attentive (“can you say more about how that made you feel?”).

Avoid feedback that is: condemning (“oh my, I have never heard of anyone doing that”), counseling/fixing (“you should . . . have you tried . . . you need to stop . . .”) or all about you (“that reminds me of when I . . .”). Also be careful about encouragement that is “too soon.” When someone has suffered pain or deep loss it is usually not the time to say that it will all be okay, that “God has a plan” or that this has happened to you and that it served an amazing purpose in your life. Usually it’s best to just say, “I’m so sorry. That is so hard.”

## **Kids**

Each week gifted and competent people care for our children across the street in our Kids’ Church facility. If your child needs you, your number will appear on the screens above the stage, or you will receive a text. If you have an infant with you during the meeting and he/she becomes restless, we have a room just for you in the main room by the restroom that provides privacy but also allows you to see and hear the message.

## **Covering the Cost**

An offering envelope is on your table each week (or with your local group leader). Our desire is to never charge for the Bible Study (books, coffee, childcare, DVDs, etc.). This offering allows us to make sure that all women can participate. Give as you are able — a lot, a little or nothing. We trust that together we can make this study happen for all who desire to join us.

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The audio messages that accompany this study are found in the iTunes  
Podcast for “Women at Christian Assembly”

# The Story

## & How to Use This Study

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*The Story* is a 31-week journey through the Bible that we are doing together as a **Christian Assembly** family from September 2014 to May 2015. If you do not attend Christian Assembly, no worries, we're glad to have you join us in this study. When you get the book, *The Story*, you receive a condensed version of the Bible to help you see the chronological, continuing story of God and his people. **This is the third study guide in this three session series.** You can request a copy of the first study guide by emailing [women@cachurch.com](mailto:women@cachurch.com). You can purchase the book *The Story* at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). It will also be helpful to have a Bible on hand as you use this guide. You can also look up all references on-line at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

### **How is Christian Assembly Going Through *The Story*?**

As a church family we are reading through *The Story* together each week. In the weekend worship services you will hear a sermon related to your weekly reading. Learn more at [cachurch.com/thestory](http://cachurch.com/thestory)

### **How is Women's Bible Study Going through *The Story*?**

We are following the same schedule as **Christian Assembly** and the weekend services but we will only cover 24 of the 31 weeks in our three sessions (Fall 2014, Winter 2015 and Spring 2015). If you don't attend Christian Assembly we encourage you to read all the chapters of *The Story* (even if we don't cover them in our gatherings) so that you experience the joy of knowing the God of the entire Bible.

### **How will this Study Guide Help Me Understand the Story of the Bible?**

The Bible can be a long and difficult read at times. Certain sections of the Old Testament are especially challenging. We hope that this study guide gives you a clear understanding of the character of God and the main idea of the Bible. We also hope that you will find yourself worshipping God in deeper and more passionate ways through the reflection questions provided here.

If you are exploring the Christian faith for the first time, this study gives an overview of Christianity beginning on page 4. Please feel free to question, disagree and wrestle with all that you discover. The Bible is not a book about neat, clean, nice people. Rather, the Bible is a book about really messy people being irrationally pursued by a mysterious, gracious, holy, righteous, loving and sometimes disturbing God.

The story of the Bible—even the Old Testament—is the story of Jesus. In this study we will connect every **Biblical Story** to the **Gospel Story** so that **Your Story** is marked by the beauty and the goodness of Christ.



# Key Concepts

## for Understanding the Bible

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### **What the Bible Is and Is Not**

The Bible can be a daunting book. It is filled with many genres and literary types: prophecy, historical narrative, parables, allegories, metaphors, commands, lists, poems and apocalyptic literature. In the Bible, God is shown as compassionate and patient, full of grace and abounding in kindness. But he is also shown as angry and dispensing judgment. When we read the Bible we are confronted with a God who is larger, more mysterious and more disturbing than a Sunday School teacher might let on. We encounter a God who is multidimensional and personal. He is not the make-believe god of our imagination but he is the God who is grace and truth, delightful and disturbing, infinite and intimate.

The Bible is not a self-help book, although it is filled with wisdom. The Bible is not a history book, although it is set in real time and space and is historical in context. The Bible is not a story book filled with myths and fables simply to inspire, although it is filled with narratives that are true and stories that are instructive. The Bible is not essentially about us, it is about Jesus. The Bible contains 66 books, written over some 2000 years, by an estimated 40 human authors, that make up one book divinely inspired by God that reveals Jesus Christ and the salvation God brings through him.

The Old Testament is the Bible Jesus read, memorized and quoted. The New Testament references the Old Testament almost 300 times (some scholars, who look at inferences to the Old Testament as well as direct quotes, have their count at up to 4,000 references).

[Jesus said to the Jewish leaders:] *“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”*

**John 5:39-40**

*And then Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

**Luke 24:27**

### **Jesus, the Trinity and Knowing God**

As Christians, we read the Old Testament through the lens of what is revealed in the New Testament—Jesus. He is the fulfillment of the promises in the Old Testament as well as the completion of the story of the Old Testament. And, of course, we read the New Testament with an understanding of the Old Testament that reveals God as creator, covenant-maker, king and sovereign Lord. He is the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph who pursues all people (including the Gentiles). He is the God of history—eternal, yet invading time and space.

The Old Testament promises a coming Messiah (a king, the anointed one from God). Jesus was ultimately seen by his followers as that Messiah (after quite a bit of initial confusion). The universal language of the day translated Messiah as “Christ” so that the word “Christ” is not just a name but a title meaning “the anointed king sent by God.” Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the King (Acts 17:7; Revelation 17:14, 19:16).

When reading the Bible it is important to know God as a Triune God. This is one of the unique beliefs of Christianity. The Bible never uses the word Trinity but it reveals a God who is a Trinity.

The Trinity is a mystery but absolutely central to our understanding of God. *“The doctrine of the Trinity means that there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Stated differently, God is one in essence and three in persons. These definitions express three crucial truths: (1) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons; (2) each person is fully God; and (3) there is only one God.”* (For more on the Trinity: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource/what-is-the-doctrine-of-the-trinity>).

The Trinity helps us understand that Jesus did not just show up on the scene at his birth but that he existed for all eternity. When we read Genesis 1:1 in light of Colossians 1:16-17 and John 1:1-4, 14 we see that Jesus is present in the very first verse of the Old Testament.

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . .*

**Genesis 1:1**

*For in Jesus all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*

*Jesus is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

**Colossians 1:16-17**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind . . . The Word became flesh (the person of Jesus) and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**John 1:1-4, 14**

Jesus is eternal and co-creator with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1-2). Jesus is also the Messiah promised in the Scripture.

*The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”*

**John 4:25-26**

*“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”*

**Acts 2:36**

*Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.*

**Acts 5:42**

Jesus is not only the fulfillment of the promise of Messiah, he is also the completion of the Gospel story, he is the good news.

## **The Gospel Story**

As we read the Bible it helps to know the storyline that runs from Genesis to Revelation. The story of the Bible is:

- God creates the world and everything in it (Genesis 1-2; Colossians 1:15-17)
- All of creation and humanity falls to sin, decay and death (Genesis 3 through Revelation 20, Romans 1-11)

- God sends his Son, Jesus, to redeem the world and create a new humanity (John 1, 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Matthew through Revelation).
- Ultimately, all of creation will be renewed putting an end to death, suffering, decay and injustice (Acts 3:20-21; Revelation 21-22).

We call this the **gospel** because the word **gospel** means “life-altering good news.” The gospel is not merely good advice admonishing us to live a moral life but it is good news to be received, proclaimed, enjoyed and celebrated. It is the good news that Jesus is Messiah. It is the good news of new beginnings and eternal life because of Jesus’ resurrection. It is the good news of a personal God rescuing his creation from sin and death. It is the good news that we are accepted by God not because of our religious striving but because of his benevolent grace expressed throughout Scripture.

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

*This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

**Romans 3:22-24**

The gospel is good news because it tells us that we are transformed into a new humanity in Christ. We now share the righteousness of Christ, we join the mission of Christ (justice, love, reconciliation, proclamation of his goodness) and we are becoming more like Christ through the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit who produces in us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-26).

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation . . . We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.*

*We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God sent Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 20-21**

## **Meeting God and Finding Ourselves in The Story**

The story of the Bible is the story of the beauty of God and his creation, the horrible effect of sin and God’s irrational pursuit of his rebellious creation. Augustine said that if we want to know ourselves we have to know God our creator, and if we want to know God we have to know ourselves. Each week as we study *The Story* we will explore these three themes:

### **1. The God of The Story**

- What does this chapter reveal about God?

### **2. The Gospel Story**

- How does this chapter connect to the greater Gospel Story?

### **3. Our Story**

- How does this chapter transform our stories?

## **The Beautiful, the Horrible and the Irrational Pursuit of God**

Before we dive into the actual study let’s consider the Gospel story one more time and break it into three parts: the beautiful, the horrible and the irrational pursuit of God. This is the story of the Bible. This is the story that changes our story and the trajectory of our life.

### **[1] The Beautiful**

The Bible is the story of God. He is beautiful because he is glorious, meaning that he is valuable

and ultimately worthy of praise, adoration and following. A major theme in the Bible is the glory of God.

God is beautiful because he is perfection, holiness, righteousness, justice, love, kindness, faithfulness, eternal, Trinity (God who is One, God who is three—forever in relationship, forever expressing love), joy, hope, creator, ruler, king, forgiveness, grace, truth, patience, all-knowing, everywhere present . . . and the list could go on. It is important to remember that God is not just loving: he is love. God is not just forgiving: he is forgiveness. God is not just righteous: he is righteousness. And God is always all of these attributes simultaneously. For instance, when we see God as just he does not cease being love and when we see him as love, he does not cease being just.

God's beauty is seen throughout Scripture and is seen in Jesus. Jesus "*is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*" — Hebrews 1:3. Also consider 2 Corinthians 4:6.

The Bible is first and foremost about God, but it is also about us. It is the story of men and women in relationship with their creator. We are beautiful because he is beautiful. We are beautiful because we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). We are beautiful because we share in the glory of God and are given the dignity of a purpose determined by God himself.

*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and  
crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet . . .*

**Psalm 8:3-6**

We are beautiful because we belong to God. We were created by him and for him (Colossians 1:16).

## **[2] The Horrible**

So, if God is beautiful and we are beautiful, why is there so much suffering, evil and pain in this world? How can we be so flawed and broken if we are so beautiful? The Bible gives us a context for understanding this conflict that must first be understood in light of the beauty. The horror is that the beauty of God's intent is marred by the sin of humanity.

We don't love the word "sin". It seems filled with guilt, shame and hate. Many use this word to point a finger at others ("they are sinners") or to gain religious power and control ("we're the good people, we're the righteous ones—follow us, be like us"). But when the Bible speaks of sin it speaks of a condition that we all possess (there is no "us and them" in the gospel).

*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*

**Romans 3:23**

Note that in this passage, sin is connected to falling short of God's glory — the very thing we were created for (to bear his image, to be like him in his beauty). We see in Chapter One of *The Story* (Genesis 1-3) that when God created humankind he gave them freewill and choice. He placed them in paradise and gave them all that they needed along with the comfort, joy and security of his presence.

For humans to live freely they had to have the ability to choose for or against God. So God gave them that ability. There was a myriad of trees in paradise, but God declared that they could not eat from one of them. They could eat from all the others, but not that one. He warned that if they chose to eat from it, they would die. This wasn't just about eating fruit, it was about demonstrating faith in God their creator and king. In choosing to eat the fruit of that tree they said "no" to trusting God. At the core of "sin" is the desire to be our own god, to be the ruler of our own destiny.



When the man and woman made this choice against God (to eat from that one tree) they set into motion death, decay and a nature bent on self (Genesis 4:7-8, 5:1-31; Isaiah 50:2; Romans 1:21-25, 5:12-21, 6:23). Men and women experienced a spiritual death (separation from the presence of God in the Garden) and a physical death (people died—Genesis 4-5). The consequence of sin effects everything. Sin destroys our relationships—men and women experience shame, mistrust and blame (Genesis 3:6-13), there is now murder (Genesis 4:8), death (Genesis 5), wickedness and evil that begins in the heart (Genesis 6:5-8), pride (Genesis 11) and on and on and on. Sin causes alienation from God because we choose to worship created things over and above the Creator (Romans 1:25). The result of sin is the decay of bodies (sickness and disease that lead to death) and the destruction of nature (floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, etc., Romans 8:18-22). Sin touches everything.

“Sin is pervasive, subtle, deceptive and deadly,” says author Graham Goldsworthy. It is only when we recognize this despairing truth that God’s grace can ambush our hearts and our lives. When we consider our rebellion toward God we begin to see how truly irrational it is that he pursues us.

### **[3] The Irrational Pursuit of God**

Sin is always ultimately against God. This is why it is irrational that God comes after us with an outpouring of love, forgiveness, grace and redemption. God’s gracious pursuit is foreseen in Genesis 3:15 when he alludes to the coming of Jesus (the future offspring of the woman) who will bring a final end to the ways of Satan. Throughout the Old Testament we see that God does not ignore sin, but even in dispensing justice he continues to pour out love for his creation even as they continually display disobedience, selfish ambition, ingratitude and pride. God doesn’t pursue us because we pursue him, he pursues us because he is love.

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:*

*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

**Romans 5:6-11**

The story of God is the story of his persistent and irrational pursuit of those who turned their back on him. It is the story of God restoring our relationship with him through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.*

**1 Peter 3:18**

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering . . .*

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory . . . those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

**Romans 8:1-3, 14-17, 30**

# The Story: Chapter Twenty-Six

The Hour of Darkness

[Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 13-14, 16-19]



## **notes from the message**

Use this page to record notes from the opening talk.

[For easy access to the audio messages you can install the App that is available for Apple and Android devices. Go to the App store and search Christian Assembly Women. These messages are also available on the Women at Christian Assembly Podcast].

## **Group Discussion ► Chapter Twenty-Six**

Before discussing the message, get to know the people in your group. Use the following questions as a guide. Take a moment to record your answers to the questions and then share them with one another.

If you could have one super power what would it be?

Name three things you are looking forward to in the next six months.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What one question do you want to ask Jesus today?

What is your one take-away from the message on chapter twenty-six of *The Story*?

How will you apply what you heard to your life this week?

# The Story: Chapter Twenty–Seven

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The Resurrection

[Matthew 27-28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 19-21]



**Read chapter twenty-seven of *The Story* and record your general observations.**

## **The God of the Story: Jesus is Risen**

This chapter records the Resurrection of Jesus following his death on the cross. Consider the words of Jesus found on the following pages and record what they reveal about him (the Scripture passage is also listed to quickly find the words of Jesus).

Page 383-384 (John 20:11-17)

Page 384-385 (Luke 24:13-27)

Page 385-386 (Luke 24:36-49)

Page 386 (John 20:24-29)

Page 388 (Matthew 28:16-20)

## **The Gospel Story**

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:17**, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile . . ." Read all of **1 Corinthians 15** and record what it reveals about Jesus, the resurrection and the gospel.

## **Our Story**

The resurrection of Jesus promises us life with him today and life with him for all eternity. The resurrection is a source of hope and power. Consider what this means for you today.

### **The Hope of the Resurrection**

Read **John 11:17-27**. Meditate on the words of Jesus. What does this mean for you today?

Paul promises us that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us and brings power to our lives. Read the following passages and record their message of hope for you today.

**Romans 8:9-17**

**Romans 6:1-14**

How will you live differently this week in light of the resurrection?

Who is God inviting you to share this message of hope with this week?

**notes from the message**  
**chapter twenty-seven**



# The Story: Chapter Twenty-Eight

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New Beginnings

[Acts 1-10, 12]



Read chapter twenty-eight of *The Story* and record your first impressions and general observations.

## **The God of the Story**

What does this chapter reveal about God, the Holy Spirit?

What does this chapter reveal about God, the Son (Jesus)?



## **The Gospel Story**

Chapter twenty-eight is packed with the beauty of Christ, the Holy Spirit and the passion of the early Church. The two gospel truths we want to focus on this week are: [1] salvation is in Jesus alone (page 394, Acts 4:12) and [2] those who place their faith in Jesus are changed people.

### **Jesus is the Only Name, the Only Way**

The Scripture tells us that salvation is in Christ alone. This can be a controversial belief but one that is at the core of the Christian faith. Read the following passages and record what they reveal about salvation through Christ alone.

**Acts 4:12**

**John 14:5-7**

**Romans 3:21-26**

**I Timothy 2:3-6**

### **The Gospel Changes Us**

What five words would you use to describe the people of the early Church?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What surprises you most about the way the early Church lived?

## **Our Story**

The Gospel changes us. The book of Acts tells the story of changed people captivated by the truth of Jesus and the conviction that he is worthy of their lives.

### **Transformed by the Gospel**

How has the good news of Jesus transformed your life in the past six months?

The early Church was a growing church as many heard and received the grace and truth of Jesus for the first time. God's plan was always that his people would tell others about him. Read **2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2** and record what it reveals about:

1. The motivation for ministry and mission

2. The message of the ministry given to all believers

Why do you think Paul chose to call the church "Christ's ambassadors"? What does an ambassador do?

How can you be Christ's ambassador this week?

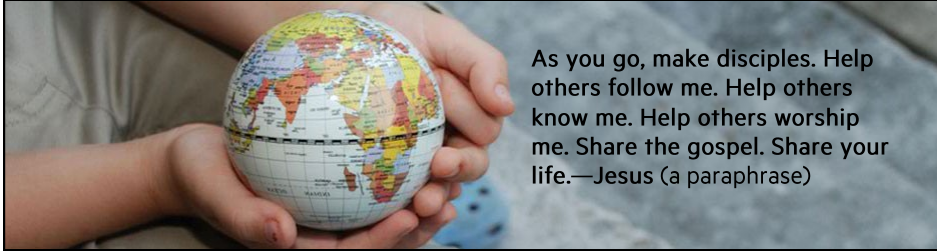
**notes from the message**  
**chapter twenty-eight**



# The Story: Chapter Twenty-Nine

## Paul's Mission

[Acts 13-14, 16-20; Romans 1, 3-6, 8, 12, 15; 1 Corinthians 1, 3, 5-6, 10, 12-13, 15-16; Galatians 1, 3, 5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1-5]



As you go, make disciples. Help others follow me. Help others know me. Help others worship me. Share the gospel. Share your life.—Jesus (a paraphrase)

**Read chapter twenty-nine of *The Story* and record your first impressions and general observations.**

## The God of the Story

Repeatedly this chapter tells of the works of God. What signs and wonders does God perform in the life of the early Church?

What is preached about Jesus?

## **The Gospel Story**

The early Church was made up of gospel-proclaimers. Read back over pages 416-418 (for a complete reading see **1 Thessalonians 1-3**) and discover what gospel-proclaimers say and do.

What was the message the gospel-proclaimers proclaimed?

How did they share their message?

What did these gospel-proclaimers seem to value most?

What opposition did they face?

How was God present and powerful in the lives of those proclaiming him?

## **Our Story**

In **1 Thessalonians 1-3** (*The Story*, pages 416-418) we see Paul declaring his love for the church in Thessalonica and bringing the gospel to them. Paul says he came: [1] in spite of opposition; [2] seeking to please God, not people; [3] with care; [4] with encouragement; and [5] sharing his life as well as the gospel.

### **Sharing Not Only the Gospel of God but our Lives as Well**

What opposition do you face (real or perceived) when you think of sharing God's good news with others?

How can you demonstrate care and encouragement when you share the gospel?

Sometimes we get so focused on sharing the gospel that we forget to share our lives. How can you share your life with your friends, co-workers, neighbors and family?

What's one step of faith you can take this week to share the gospel and your life?

**notes from the message**  
**chapter twenty-nine**



# The Story: Chapter Thirty

Paul's Final Days

[Acts 20-23, 27-28; Ephesians 1-6; 2 Timothy 1-4]



**Read chapter thirty of *The Story* and record your impression of Paul.**

What was Paul focus in this chapter (page 440, **Acts 20:23-24**)?

What was Paul's motivation?

What three words describe Paul's life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **The God of the Story**

What do we learn about God in this chapter?



## **The Gospel Story**

Paul tells the story of how he met Jesus on pages 442-443 (**Acts 22:3-29**). What stands out to you from this account?

In **Ephesians 1** (page 452-453) Paul describes all the benefits of a life in Christ. List each of those benefits.

In **Ephesians 2:1-10** (page 453) Paul gives a clear presentation of how a person is saved by God in Christ. What does he reveal?

## **Our Story**

Paul faces great hardship as he travels to proclaim the good news of Jesus. But he says this about his life: "I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace" (page 440, **Acts 20:24-25**). In another place he says, "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord . . . I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (**Philippians 3:8**).

### **"I Consider My Life Worth Nothing"**

What have you discovered about Jesus in this chapter and throughout The Story that makes him worthy of your life?

What is one step of obedience God is calling you to today as you follow Jesus?

Look back over the list of benefits for those who are in Christ (**Ephesians 1**). What two benefits are you most thankful for today?

1.

2.

**notes from the message**  
**chapter thirty**



# The Story: Chapter Thirty-One

The End of Time

[Revelation 1-5, 19-22]



**Read chapter thirty-one of *The Story* and record your first impressions and general observations.** Note that the “lamb” refers to Jesus and the “bride” refers to the Church.

## **The God of the Story**

In this chapter the author reveals God to us through his own observations and through what God says about himself.

What does God say about himself?

What does the author tell us about God?

## **The Gospel Story**

Look back over chapter thirty-one and consider where you encounter the gospel.

## **The Beautiful**

What do the worshipers declare to be true of God (p.463-465)?

## **The Horrible**

It is evident that some people will face judgment — what is the judgment they will face and why?

## **The Irrational Pursuit of God**

**Revelation 21-22** (pages 467-470) describes the culmination of God's pursuit and redemption of all of creation. What will the "new heaven and new earth" be like?

## **Jesus**

What do you discover about Jesus (the Lamb) in **Revelation 21-22** (pages 467-470)? Why is this significant?

## **Our Story**

Revelation is a book about worship and perseverance as much as it is about the end of time. Over ten times believers are encouraged to “overcome” (NASB translation).

### **Persevere and Worship God**

Today, what are you being called to “overcome” or “endure” for the sake of following Jesus?

How does an understanding of the new heaven and the new earth help you to persevere in this life?

The command to “worship God” appears twice in Revelation. What do the following verses reveal about worship?

**Revelation 7:11; 11:16; 19:4**

**Hebrews 12:28-29**

**Romans 12:1-2**

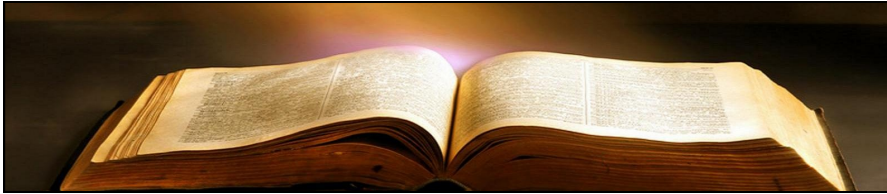
**notes from the message**  
**chapter thirty-one**



# The Story: The Whole Story

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A Look Back at The Whole Story  
[Genesis to Revelation]



**Look back over your notes from The Story. Go as far back as you can. List three words that summarize what you have learned from The Story.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **The God of the Story**

Summarize what you have learned about the God of the Story.

Take a moment to simply worship God for who he is. Use **Psalm 29** as a guide for your prayers. Record at least 5 things you love about God.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



## **The Gospel Story**

### **The Beautiful**

What have you discovered to be most beautiful about The Story?

### **The Horrible**

What has struck you as most horrible in The Story?

### **The Irrational Pursuit of God**

How have you seen God pursue people from the beginning to the end of The Story?

### **Jesus**

What do you love most about Jesus after reading The Story?

Take a moment to simply worship Jesus. Use **Colossians 1:13-20** as a guide for your prayers. Record your worship here.

## **Our Story**

**Following Jesus. Worshiping God. Living by the Power of the Holy Spirit.**

What most surprised you about the Bible as you read The Story?

How are you different because of your time reading, studying and meditating on The Story?

What steps of faith will you take to continue following Jesus now that you have completed The Story?

**notes from the message**  
**The Whole Story**



## The People in My Group



# Prayer Requests

