

The Story Starts with a Bang

The Story—part 1

September 11, 2016

DAY 1: Creation

1. Ever since the beginning of time, man has asked the great philosophical questions:

- Why is there something instead of nothing?
- How did we get here?
- Is there a God?
- What is the purpose of life?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Who is man?
- What is man's problem?
- What is the solution?

2. The bible gives us answers to all those questions. Some of the answers come in didactic form (principles, teaching, etc.) and some of the answers come within the context of story.

Read Genesis 1-2 (or pages 1-4 in The Story)

3. In our western secular culture there is a concerted movement to minimize or eradicate God from our thinking as having any weight to our lives. People who either wittingly or unwittingly ascribe to this notion have just plunged the sword into man having ANY meaning outside himself. You'll hear people say, "We just need to make up or find our own meaning to life," without understanding that they have limited the meaning of life to *their little story*, rather than finding meaning in God's grand story.

4. The bible makes clear that these are your two choices. Either YOU decide your own meaning to your life (is this an oxymoron?) or you find the meaning of life AND your life in God's story.

5. A few notes from Genesis 1 and 2:

- a. We get the first hint of a triune God in the Creation account ("Let us make man in our image").
- b. God is fundamentally relational.
- c. Being made in God's image, we are created to relate to God and one another.
- d. God existed before Creation and before what we call "time."
- e. Marriage between a man and woman is meant to reflect something wondrous in the relationship of the Triune God.

6. What strikes you most from Genesis 1 and 2?

DAY 2: The Fall

Read Genesis 3 (or pages 5 to the top of page 7 in The Story)

1. Satan comes to Eve and suggests a counterfeit story to God's grand story.
2. Satan's story is meant to create doubt in the hearer, suggesting that God is "holding out" his best from Adam and Eve. That doubt creates a wedge in the heart.
3. The essence of Satan's suggestion is that God is not as good as He thinks He is.
4. "Because God is 'not trustworthy' you would be 'smart' to take matters into your own hands. Find your own happiness. Listen to what your heart/mind says instead of what God says.
5. Eve is genuinely deceived by Satan's infernal lies about God, and "buys" the story that she and Adam need to "look out for #1" as their top priority.
6. Satan "promises" some lavish payouts:
 - "You will be like God"
 - "You will be wise"
 - "You will know good and evil"
 - "You can be your own boss; answer to no one but yourself"
 - "Do what you want! What could be the harm? You'll feel strong and self-reliant. That's what life is all about."
7. Though Eve was deceived by Satan's counterfeit story, Adam was not. However, *his choice* to rebel and disobey God was completely his. He knew what he was doing.
8. The results of this rebellion had immediate and long-lasting repercussions.
 - Adam and Eve hid from God.
 - Adam blamed Eve for their rebellion and disobedience
 - Eve blamed Satan for the mess.
 - Evil, in the form of pride, rebellion, stubbornness, self-centeredness, and a thousand other sins found their genesis here.
 - Since Adam and Eve could not be trusted not to eat of the Tree of Life, God banished them from the Eden. (Allowing human beings an eternal pursuit of evil and self-centeredness would be destructive and horrific). Death puts limits on evil in this world.
9. God announces his curses into their new world. The Garden was free from pain and frustration, but now, human beings would live in the "real" world where frustration, failure, and pain is meant to drive us to God as our first love.
10. What strikes you most from "The Fall"?

DAY 3: Human nature: fallen

Read Genesis 4, (or page 7 in The Story)

1. After the devastation of Genesis 3, what would human nature look like after Adam and Eve? It doesn't take long to find out!

2. We can infer from the text that God made clear to Cain and Abel that atonement for sin was accomplished by the shedding of blood. Animal sacrifice, as a substitute for human sin would bring forgiveness and a new start.

3. Cain insisted on bringing a less costly sacrifice, and one in direct violation of God's gracious offer of atonement instead of judgment.

4. When God called him on it, Cain threw a "hissy fit."

5. Instead of responding in repentance and faith to God, Cain dug his heels in. Here is a summary of what Cain does:
 - He's envious of Abel who did what was right and drew favor from God.
 - Cain couldn't stand it that God favored Abel when Abel did what was right. Cain's pride was strung. "What's wrong with my offering? Why does my brother get better treatment than me?"
 - Cain could not stand it that he didn't get his way.
 - Cain deceived Abel, lured him out into the open field and killed him.
 - Cain attempted to hide the body and the murder from God.
 - Cain lied to God when confronted with the whereabouts of Abel.
 - When Cain heard his punishment for murdering Abel he argued with God, a pouty, "You're not fair," appeal.

6. Genesis 4 is a devastating chapter to proud human nature. We learn the following:
 - Every person is born with a sin nature that naturally minimizes God at best and make self the center of life. The effect on relationships will be catastrophic.
 - Mankind will justify almost any rebellion.
 - I will naturally blame others for my own messes.
 - Justified self-centeredness resides in every human heart and drives even our good deeds.

7. The bible exposes our sinful hearts by looking at a third person, like Cain.

8. What part of the story of Cain resonates with you? Have you seen any of the sins of Cain in yourself?

DAY 4: Noah: Would a new start with humans be a workable solution?

Read Genesis 6-8 (or pages 8-12 in The Story)

1. Human nature spiraled downward and widened.

Genesis 6:5 But the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

2. Humanity had become so terrible that to allow it to continue would have been an act of cruelty. Mankind refused to come to God for the remedy to the sin problem. Therefore, only one thing could be done. God would virtually start again with humanity!

3. What would happen if God started off with one righteous man? Could a new generation of people chart a different course this time?

4. Noah was tasked with making an ark. At no time during the next one hundred and twenty years did anyone respond to God in repentance, even in the face of judgment.

5. Only eight people responded to the invitation to escape the rain, then the flood.

6. The immediate affect was hopeful. Noah built an altar and worshipped God. God made a covenant with Noah.

7. But the hopefulness would turn dark. An episode is recorded where Noah was drunk and naked, when one of his sons discovered his father's shame and then proudly told both his brothers of their father's shame.

8. The "experiment" (from our human perspective) of starting with even the most righteous man of his time had failed.

9. God's story seems to be off the rails. Human nature is still just as screwed up as it had been after Adam and Eve's sin.

10. If you had been God, what would you have been thinking? What could be done to fix man?

11. What strikes you about God's story at this point?

DAY 5: Tower of Babel (Big government???)

Read Genesis 11

1. Following the story of Noah and the ark, mankind multiplies and ignores God.

Genesis 11:3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.

⁴Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

2. What was mankind trying to accomplish? Look at all the things in v. 4.

3. What's driving their ambition?

4. To what extent is God a part of their ambition and plans?

Genesis 11:5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.

⁶The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."

5. What dangers did God see among the men in Babel? Does this remind you of the United Nations?

6. As men work together, the collective efforts of sin can make for an increase of evil.

Genesis 11:7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." ⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why it was called Babel--because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

7. God is at work to minimize evil, to make it more difficult for man to carry out his godless efforts.

8. As we finish the first eleven chapters of Genesis and the first of thirty-one chapters of "The Story" what strikes you so far? What have you learned about God? About your own human nature?

VIDEO CURRICULUM:

Sistine Chapel; Michelangelo; days of creation on the ceiling; 4th portrait is THE POINT of creation of Adam!! VERY GOOD.

Tree of Knowl of Good and Evil; rejected God's story, His vision. 5th portrait of Michelangelo.

Banished: sin, hatred, drama, war. Unlimited life—destructive of others and self.

Cain/Abel: lower story: relationships gone bad. The fallen of nature of Adam and Eve showed up in Cain and Abel!!!

Upper Story: God wants us back.

Life had become so bad, just start over? Noah! Last 3 pictures on Sistine Chapel. Great flood; only 8 humans saved.

POINT: 9th painting: Noah is drunk in his tent; son's decision to look with shame on his father, Noah. The solution to get humans back to God will not come through even the best of human beings! WHAT THEN????

The greatest love story ever told will unfold!!

THE HEART OF THE STORY (Randy's book)

Foreword (Lucado)

Upper Story: plan of redemption. God creating an eternal people for an eternal place in eternal love relationship.

Without seeing the Upper Story, life's events will perplex and confuse us. It is especially in these times that knowing the plot line of the Upper Story and its context can anchor us when our Lower Stories seem to have run off the rails.

Some of the worst Lower Stories in scripture shine the brightest when viewed from the Upper Story of redemption. Joseph in prison for a crime he did not commit ends up saving the nation of Egypt from a seven-year national famine. Paul's imprisonment for his faith results in untold numbers of Roman guards coming to faith, and four books of the New Testament being written. Out of tragedy comes triumph. Out of suffering comes salvation.

Illus: reading the biblical stories without the context of God's Upper Story is like trying to put together a 1,000-piece puzzle without benefit of the picture of the completed puzzle on the front of the box.

Introduction: The Art Gallery and the Mural

When I was in college I thought a bunch of old guys sat down and wrote the bible. It wasn't until I actually did some informed research that I discovered that there were over forty different authors who wrote the bible, but not at one time or one sitting, but over a fifteen-hundred-year span of time, in three different languages, on three different continents, and from all different walks of life. Yet, in spite of all those variables, there is one theme from start to finish: God's redemption of His fallen creation.

It's been said that the bible begins with a love story for one chapter, a marriage for the second chapter and then a nasty divorce by chapter 3. The rest of the bible is God's efforts to bring about a reconciliation of a wandering spouse (people) to Himself.

Ephesians 2:10

ROBERT: pic for pp

Louvre Museum; Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci. Worth over \$700 million. 20 7/8 x 30 inches (oven door). She was born June 15, 1479. Her husband had the painting commissioned in honor of the birth of their second son. You look at her and a lot of questions arise. What was her life like? Was she embarrassed by this? Was she flattered? Was there an ache in the heart that a hint of a smile tried to cover up? We don't know.

Other famous paintings at the Louvre. Christ at Emmaus, by Rembrandt; Liberty Leading the People, by Eugene Delacroix; The Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist, by Raphael. Each painting has a unique story, each story being unrelated to Mona Lisa.

There is another famous work of art that is more well-known than the Moa Lisa. It's the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel painted by Michelangelo. He captures the full sweep of the biblical history. The most famous picture is this one, God reaching out Adam. There are over three hundred characters painted on the ceiling: Adam, Eve, Noah, Jacob, David to name a few. While each individual has his/her own story, the stories are all connected to God's Upper Story in a grand epic. There are scenes of creation, of Noah, and the prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus. The paintings come down onto the walls around you depicting one central story: humanity's need for salvation as offered by God through Jesus.

We will take a chronological "road trip" through the biblical narrative, looking at both the Lower Stories of people and God's Upper Story.

Each of us has a lower story. But God's Upper Story in our lives isn't about getting people through hard times, though He does that, or bailing us out of trouble when we're over our heads, though He sometimes does that. We call out to God from our Lower Story and He meets us but not always according to our liking or our preferred results. He draws us to Himself as His highest priority, and calls us to walk with Him, reflecting His love to the people in our lives as a higher priority than how we want our lives to turn out. No matter how bad our lower story may look at any given moment, His promise is that He will use the good, the bad and the ugly for our best, shaping us to be like Him and to value Him above anything else.

Matthew 10:39 "If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me."

Chapter One: What's the Big Idea?

Introduction: The beginning of our journey through the story of the Bible is like the beginning of an action-packed movie. If you miss the opening minutes of a movie with its fast-paced scenes, you will not understand the rest of the story. It is the same with the Bible's grand Story. The Story opens with a "big bang." Not the "big bang" of evolutionary theory, but the "big bang" of the revelation of God Who is the main character of the Grand Story.

- I. The Bible Story opens with the “big bang” of creation.
 - A. The opening verse, Genesis 1:1, introduces us to the Story’s main character: God. The “big bang” is not an impersonal accident, but the creative purpose of a personal God.
 - B. The “big bang” of creation is presented poetically and artistically.
 - 1. Days 1, 2, and 3 are places created by God.
 - Day 1—Light and Dark
 - Day 2—Sky and Water
 - Day 3—Land
 - 2. Days 4, 5, and 6 those places are filled with the things the places were created for.
 - Day 4—Sun and Moon/stars
 - Day 5—Birds and Sea creatures
 - Day 6—Animals and human beings
 - C. The “big bang” of creation concludes with God’s core passion: human beings.
 - 1. God’s core passion is people made in God’s image, Genesis 1:26-27, as depicted in Adam and Eve
 - 2. All the beauties of creation are secondary to you. This truth is a self-esteem builder. God’s supreme passion is to be with us at all costs.
- II. The Bible Story continues with the “big bang” of the Fall (Adam and Eve’s rebellion).
 - A. Adam and Eve were created with the freedom and power to choose.

God does not force love.
 - B. The story introduces the tale of two trees.
 - 1. The “tree of life” and the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” presents a choice: Genesis 2: 9 and 17
 - 2. Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate from the forbidden “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” and God’s vision to be with people was ruined.

The choice was not just, “I was hungry, and I don’t see why I can’t eat this fruit.” The choice was based on an important question that Satan posed, Eve was fooled by, but Adam bought. “Is

God holding out on you? Is God as good as He makes Himself out to be? Does He really want your best? C'mon, you know better! Trust your instincts! If you live God's way, you'll miss out on everything you could have and deserve!"

Adam and Eve stood at that fork of the road every person intuitively knows.

(transition: the rest of the Bible is about God's pursuit to get us back)

- III. The Bible Story reports the "big bang" of sin's damage to the human race.
 - A. Because Adam and Eve chose a different vision than God's vision, sin became part of their spiritual DNA and they produced more sinners.
 - 1. Genesis 4 – 9 present sin and a sin nature permeating the human race.
 - 2. God's chooses Noah to build the ark and God does a "do over" of the human race after the judgment of flood waters
 - 3. The flood erased the wicked human race, but did not erase the sin nature from Noah and his family: Genesis 9: 20-23.

- IV. The Bible Story offers a salvation clue even in the midst of the opening "big bang."
 - A. After Adam and Eve sinned and became aware of their nakedness, they made fig leaf clothing to cover their nakedness. God took away the fig leaves and covered Adam and Eve with the skins of animals.
 - B. The Clue: For God to restore the vision that human beings are His supreme passion will require the shedding of blood.

Application: From the creation story we discover the value of all human beings. God wants to be with you. Think about that. You. God wants to personally be with you. At great cost to God, God has done everything possible to get you back. You are valuable. True, lasting self-esteem begins by believing what God says about you.

Creation: The Beginning of Life as We Know It

Illustrations (stories, humor)

Creation of woman: "It says that God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and he pulled out his brains and made the woman. That's the way my wife's version reads."

There is a parallel between our **40 Days of Prayer** for God to change us through *The Story* – “praying up a storm” – and the storm of Noah’s day that God used to restore his relationship with mankind because he wanted so deeply to be with him.

The Oak Hills template for 40 Days of Prayer, implemented during the forty days leading into The Story, is posted in the Online Resource Library, on the Bulletin Board, under Preparation.

Special Features (visuals, audience engagement)

Place: On the map in the front inside cover of *The Story*, draw a tree between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to represent the Garden of Eden.

Place: Later in the message when talking about Noah, on the map in the front inside cover of *The Story*, draw an ark where it says Assyria.



The Old Testament map from the inside cover of The Story is provided as a .jpg file in the Maps folder on the Weekend Services page of the Online Resource Library.

Upper Story/Lower Story

*Much of the following material is taught by Randy Frazee in the adult curriculum DVD. The adult curriculum video lessons were based on his original teaching in these sermons, so be aware that **there will be overlap** between those videos and the Upper Story/Lower Story segments of these sermon features documents.*

God created the world with the grand vision of dwelling together with us in the world. It is God’s supreme passion to be with you. God gave us freedom of choice. Adam and Eve chose out of the freedom of their will to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thus ruining God’s vision of dwelling together with us. Sin was deposited permanently into the nature of Adam and Eve, a deadly virus separating them from a holy God. God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and set angels to guard it, in order to keep them from the Tree of Life, which would sustain life forever. Without access to this tree, they would eventually die. We think God is being cruel by letting us die. But it’s actually an act of God’s grace to keep us from being able to sustain our life forever in a state of sin and hatred. Man’s choice resulted in separation from God, and it broke his heart. The ‘rest of the story,’ the entire Bible, tells us of the relentless pursuit of God and the extent to which he will go in order to get us back.

The flood is God's first attempt to go to great measures to get us back. But it doesn't work because it doesn't deal with sin. Sin goes onto the ark with Noah, and it disembarks with him (Genesis 9, *not* in *The Story*).

Application

Point: *You* are the point of *The Story*. When God replaced Adam and Eve's fig leaves with garments of skin, he gave us a clue as to how far he would go to fulfill his supreme desire to restore a relationship with us. Even when we are ashamed and feeling vulnerable, he covers us in order to restore our relationship with him, but covering us requires the shedding of blood. We are invited to soak in the fact that the God of the universe wants to be with us more than anything on earth, literally.