

### WHAT IS THE IDEA BEHIND ONE STORY?

All of Scripture is telling one story. It's a story about Jesus and our need for Him. The great story is comprised of many little stories found throughout the Old and New Testament narratives, and it is reinforced in the law, poetry, prophecy, and epistles. Every passage in some way draws our attention to our fallenness and Christ's solution to our fallenness.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden, humanity broke, and the world broke too. This rebellion, known as "the

The Bible is not a book about what we must do; it is about what Jesus has done and will do for us.

Fall," is the ultimate cause behind our sin and suffering, our badness and our brokenness. Sin has affected us in numerous ways, and the Bible speaks about this on every page. It reveals broken people living in a broken world so that we can see ourselves reflected in their lives.

The Bible also shows us Christ's solution. It anticipates and demonstrates how only Jesus can solve the deep problems caused by the Fall. It awakens our longing for Him to come and rescue us. It strengthens our dependence on His goodness. The Bible is not a book about what we must do; it is about what Jesus has done and will do for us. When properly understood, both the Old and New Testaments call us to find life in Jesus. Every story whispers His name.

This was Jesus's own understanding of the Scriptures. He said in John 5, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me."

In Luke 24 he told his followers the same thing: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Jesus taught that the Old Testament is a book that is chiefly about Himself. As such, He invites us to experience Himself in His Word. As we see His work on our behalf, our hearts will be set on fire to love and obey Him.

This Christocentric understanding contradicts moralism. Moralists suggest that the Bible's purpose is to tell you what you are doing wrong and to tell you to knock it off. "Do this. Don't do that. Be your own savior." While it is true that the Bible calls us to obedience, it is an obedience motivated and empowered by what Christ has done and hope in what He will do. The Bible never affirms that obedience produces salvation nor that it is a means to earning God's love. It is always a response to the love He gives us in His Son.

### DOES IT ALL REALLY POINT TO CHRIST?

Yes, absolutely, but not always in a way that is obvious or explicit. When we say that all of Scripture points us to Christ, we don't mean that He is literally a character in every story, nor that every prophecy is only about Him. Scripture always has a context and an immediate meaning. It's critical that you understand its meaning in its original context without imagining Jesus to be present in artificial ways. But invariably, when you understand any passage accurately, you will also see the fingerprints of Christ's redemption. St. Augustine said, "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old Testament and the Old

Testament is unveiled in the New Testament.”

Our purpose in One Story is not to help you imagine Jesus to be present where He isn't, but to help you discern Him where He is. Here are a few of the ways the Old Testament points to Jesus:

The Old Testament foreshadows Christ's work. Abraham's offer of his son as a sacrifice is pregnant with foreshadowings of God's sacrifice of His Son. As Abraham promised, “God will provide for himself the lamb.” The Old Testament stories lay the groundwork for understanding the ministry of Christ.

The Old Testament climaxes in Christ's work. In Israel's exodus out of Egyptian captivity, there is a sense of relief for Israel. But as the story continues, you find that they continue to get into trouble by wandering in the desert, forgetting God in the Promised Land, and being overrun by other kingdoms. God continues to rescue His people, and His story of rescue climaxes with Christ's redemptive work as He frees us from our captivity to sin. All of the previous stories let us know that we need an ultimate rescue, an ultimate resolution.

The Old Testament reveals the nature of God embodied fully in Jesus. The Law of Moses reflects the goodness of God. It draws a charcoal sketch of His characteristics. But when Jesus shows up, we clearly see those things manifested in Him. He is the exact representation of the Father. In Jesus we most clearly see the glory of the Father through what Jonathan Edwards called, “the admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies.”

#### HOW IS THE ONE STORY GUIDEBOOK ORGANIZED?

In the One Story peer group guidebook we will be equipping you

to study various genres of Scripture Christocentrically during your daily times in the Word and weekly with a group of peers. A genre is a category of composition that has its own style or form and therefore its own rules of interpretation. Even if you aren't familiar with the term, you're probably familiar with the concept. Moreover, you are probably reasonably skilled in recognizing and interpreting a variety of genres you encounter in every day communication. You know intuitively that the form of communication your dad is using as he yells at the TV when a ref blows a call is different from the form of communication he uses when he explains to you how to file your taxes. He may be less than literal when he details what miseries he hopes will fall upon the blind, corrupt official, but more precise and exacting when a potential audit looms.

Likewise, the various passages in Scripture were written in different genres and therefore have different rules of interpretation. When you read the law, you should expect very clear depictions of what is right and what is wrong, as well as explicit statements about reward and punishment for obedience and disobedience. However, if you bring those expectations to the narrative passages, you may be disappointed. Oftentimes, narrative authors will describe God's people doing something awful without telling you that it's wrong. The authors are not affirming sin, they are depicting real life and using it to teach. They want you to discover the lesson yourself as you filter their narrative through other things God has revealed in his Word, and as you watch the consequences play out.

In poetic passages, the language is more emotional, and less literal. It's no less true, but the truth it reveals is often more about the writer's feelings than anything else. The epistles meanwhile are heavily contextual. There is a specific author writing to a specific audience about specific circumstances.

As you grow in your skills, you'll be better able to discern the transcendent truth revealed in the particular event being discussed.

Over twenty-six weeks you'll work through twenty-six selected passages organized by these genres. You'll study five or six passages in a given compositional style so you can master that skill before moving on to learn to study a different part of the Bible. At the start of each new section, we'll give you some tips on how to best study and understand that particular genre.

#### WHERE WE GO FROM HERE.

Each week, you'll only study one passage, which means you'll revisit it during your daily times in the Word. Over five days you'll mark up the text and work through the PEER questions. Then you'll meet with your peer group to share your discoveries, learn from each other, and help one another apply the lessons from that week.

# Introduction

## Mark up the text

Before you can find Christ in a passage, you need to do the work to understand it thoroughly in its original historical context by carefully looking at the grammar, syntax, and context. From a robust understanding you'll be better able to discern how Christ is legitimately present in a passage and avoid inserting Him falsely.

Included in this guidebook is the text of each passage we recommend you study. They are printed with wide margins and generous spacing so you can mark them up. By the time you are done, your passage should be a huge mess of criss-crossed lines, lists of verbs, commands, promises, and circled highlights. Maybe you'll make a list of things that confuse you or diagram a few sentences à la fifth grade. If you slow down and take the thing apart, you'll be surprised by what you'll see.

Study a passage during your daily times in the Word. Then meet with your Peer Group to share your discoveries.

Below are some of the connecting words and relationships to look for when you study the passage. Not everything you notice will be significant, but by observing the flow of the text and making note of connections, relationships, repetitions, etc., it will open itself to you. Initially, don't worry about drawing conclusions, but rather just learn to look and see what the text says. As you do, pray for the Spirit to lead you; what is important will begin to emerge.

## Connectors

**Contrast:** but, even though, much more, nevertheless, yet, although, than, otherwise.

**Comparison:** too, also, and, as, just as, so also, likewise, like.

**Reason:** because, for this purpose, for this reason, for, since.

**Result:** so then, therefore, as a result, thus, then, that, so that, in order that.

**Time:** now, until, when, before, after, while, since.

**Correlatives:** so... so also, for... as, so... as.

**Condition:** if, if... then.

## Relationships

How does this passage relate to what comes before it [and after it]?

Are there things that are alike/different?

Are there things that are repeated?

Is there a progression?

Once you've dissected a passage, you are ready to ask the questions of the text that will help you discover how it points us to Christ. In each genre the path to discovering Christ is slightly different. This guidebook gives focused instruction at the start of each section, and suggests genre-specific questions. By and large, each section follows the same general pattern. Fill out the PEER worksheet, one column a day, allowing yourself time to reflect on the text throughout the week.

## Profile the Passage

Synthesize the observations you made while marking up the text and record them in response to the questions under, "Profile the Passage."

**Expose the Problem**

The following day, review the passage again, but this time look deeper to discover and record the problem of our fallenness, whether sin or suffering, that the human and divine authors are addressing.

**Explore the Solution**

This day is often the most fun as it is when we begin to see how the passage anticipates or points to Christ's solution to our fallenness. Look for connections between how God intervenes in this passage and how he ultimately intervened in Christ.

- Dissect**  
Mark up the passage, noting your thoughts
- Profile**  
Observe the main thoughts of the passage
- Expose**  
Observe the main thoughts of the passage
- Explore**  
Discover how the text points to Jesus
- Reflect**  
Consider how this applies to your life

**Reflect and Respond**

Consider how this passage matters in your life, and how the Spirit may be calling you to respond.

**Meet with your Peer Groups**

While you can certainly use *One Story* for personal study or as content for any Bible Study, we want to suggest a Peer Group as the ideal format for processing the content.

The end goal of Cru is to launch men and women into a life-long adventure with Jesus Christ. We hope that long after grad-

uation you will be walking with Jesus, resting in His love for you, and telling everyone everywhere how great He is. Participating in a Peer Group provides a final opportunity to prepare for that adventure.

Peer Groups are leaderless Bible studies. In the *One Story* framework your Peer Group will consist of three or four trusted friends who have committed to daily working through a passage Christocentrically on their own, and then meeting weekly to discuss it. We think it's important that you transition

from being in a leader-led Bible study to a leaderless Peer Group during your senior year. After graduation it's unlikely that you'll find structures similar to those you enjoyed when you were a younger student. We'd like to help you learn a new set of skills now—while you're still here—so you can continue to use them and flourish for years to come.

After you and your friends have studied the text, come together to share what you have learned. Every group will have its own dynamic, but we hope you'll find that everyone contributes; everyone's thoughts are valued. Learn from each other, teach each other, and help each other discover Christ and embrace His solutions.

When you read stories in the Bible avoid your tendency to cast yourself as the hero.



# Narrative

It's likely that when you watch a movie your first instinct is to cast yourself as the lead. Whether we are identifying with Iron Man or Katniss, we all want to be the hero.

We often do the same thing when we read the Bible. For instance, when you read David and Goliath you might map David's life to your life and assume that the point is to tell you to face down your fears and go kill a giant. "With God's help little guys can do big things too."

But you aren't the hero, and that's not the point of the story. You and I are much more like the frightened Israelites who are facing an enemy that can and will destroy them. They need a rescuer, who at the risk of his life will defeat their enemy and win them a safety they can't obtain on their own. That story is not there to evoke our own supposed heroism, but to awaken us to our need and to point us to the True Hero. David anticipates the Great Rescuer who defeated our enemy and saved us not just at the risk of His life, but at the cost of His life.

When you read stories in the Bible, avoid your tendency to cast yourself as the hero. Instead, consider how the weak/rebellious/rescued party reminds you of your own fallenness. Then consider how the story anticipates the Great Hero, Jesus.

## Mark up the Text

Begin each week by observing the story. You and your friends will notice different things. That's fine. Just develop the skill of slowing down and noticing. Observe the text and scribble all over the page the things you find and wonder about.

## Profile the Passage

Work through the questions found on the PEER worksheet one column a day. Begin by summarizing what you learned while marking up the text in the "Profile the Passage" column.

## Expose the Problem

Consider the problems in the characters' lives. What difficulties are they facing? What character flaws are exposed? Don't just consider the hero of the story but the other characters as well. The more rigorously you think about their actual experiences the better.

Once you think you understand their experience of sin and suffering, consider what that tells you about the human experience in general. What is the disease behind the symptom? What is it about being a fallen person in a fallen world that compelled them to behave as they did? How have you seen those same problems or character flaws in the world around you?

## Explore the Solution

The next day look at the passage again, scanning for the solution. Depending on the length of the passage, it may not come fully, but how does God *begin* to solve it? What does He do to address the tension in the immediate context? He doesn't always solve it in the way the characters want, so you may not recognize it as a solution at first. Ponder how He intervenes.

After you have thought it through, you are ready for my favorite part: making the connection to Christ. This is where you really need the Spirit to lead you. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*

the best moments are when Aslan shows up. It's the same with Bible study.

When studying narrative, you might find a conspicuous similarity in the story to something Jesus did. Here's a cool example: check out Jonah 1, and then read Mark 4 where Jesus calms the storm. You might be surprised by the conspicuous overlap. What does it mean?

- Mark Up**  
Dissect the passage, noting your thoughts
- Profile**  
Observe the scene, characters, and plot
- Expose**  
Find the tension the characters face
- Explore**  
Look at how Jesus resolves the story
- Reflect**  
Look at Jesus as the hero of your story

**Peer Group**  
Share, discuss, and reflect with your group

You could also look for a recurring theme. The Bible has many themes that exist in unresolved tension until Christ comes. For instance, it describes God as being both just and merciful. Well, which is it? Does He punish sin, or forgive it? Only in Christ can He be just while justifying sinners. Another theme is the search for the King. Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are a record of the quest to find the man who will rule the nation in holiness and power. King after king lets us down. Even David is a disappointment. Every failed king reinforces the need for The Messianic King who will someday come.

Consider also the symbols. Jesus thought the bronze snake in Numbers 21 was about Him. See also Jacob's ladder, the sacrificial lamb, the Temple, the Passover, the Exodus.... What do the elements in the story teach about God's means for saving His people?

**Reflect and Respond**

After you have discovered the problem and Christ's solution, it's time to get personal. How does this story intersect with your life? If you aren't the hero of the story, who are you? Where do you see your own sin and suffering reflected in the lives of the characters?

Also consider Christ's solution. Can you rejoice that you have embraced His solution? Or have you been trying to solve things on your own? Or, have you just surrendered to the fallenness?

Finally, in light of all you've learned, how is the Spirit calling you to respond? Is there some step you need to take, some part of your heart you need to surrender, or some new way you need to trust Him? What response of repentance, trust, or obedience is the Spirit calling you to in light of what Christ has done and will do for you?

**Meet with your Peer Group**

Now that you've done all this personal study, it's time to meet with your Peer Group. Give yourselves an hour to walk through what you each have discovered. Look at each others' notes from the dissection phase. Go around the group sharing your observations from the PEER worksheet column by column, discussing what you learned or were confused by. Learn from each other, rejoice in the gospel together, and encourage each other to respond to the Spirit as He leads you.

WHERE IS SHINAR?

WERE BRICKS A NEW TECHNOLOGY?

WHY IS THIS A BIG DEAL?

1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6 And the LORD

said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

Genesis 11:1-9

THE CITY THEY MEANT TO AVOID  
DISPERSION WAS CAUSE FOR DISPERSION

DID THEY KNOW THEY  
WERE TO LIVE FOR GOD'S  
GLORY?

LET US:  
MAKE BRICKS  
A) BUILD A CITY  
B) A TOWER TO HEAVEN  
B) MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES  
A) NOT BE DISPERSED

COMMANDED  
TO "FILL THE  
EARTH"

THEY WANTED UP, HE CAME DOWN

**What are some key observations?**

THEY BUILD A CITY AND TOWER TO MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES AND NOT BE SCATTERED.

THEY TRY TO REACH UP TO HEAVEN, BUT THE LORD "CAME DOWN."

HE CONFUSES LANGUAGE SO THEY CAN'T UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

THEY ARE SCATTERED AND STOPPED.

**Is there anything unusual, confusing, or surprising?**

V. 8 SEEMS LIKE AN OVERREACTION AS IF GOD IS THREATENED. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT BUILDING A CITY WITH A TOWER? THERE MUST BE MORE GOING ON HERE.

**What's the main plot, argument, or idea?**

WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY "NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM?"

PEOPLE ARE BUILDING A CITY AND A TOWER TO MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES, AND SO THAT THEY WON'T BE SCATTERED.

GOD INTERVENES BY CONFUSING THEIR LANGUAGE TO STOP IT AND GET THEM TO SCATTER.

**In this passage:****What character flaws or difficulties are presented?**

THEY HAVE TWO GOALS AND TWO REASONS, BUT THOSE REASONS CONTRADICT BIBLICAL COMMANDS.

**GOALS:**

BUILD A CITY, MAKE A TOWER THAT REACHES TO THE HEAVENS.

**REASONS:**

NOT BE SCATTERED OVER THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH.  
MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES.

**BIBLICAL COMMANDS: (GEN 1:27-28)**

FILL THE EARTH, WITH IMAGE BEARERS WHO REFLECT GOD'S GLORY AND NAME.

**In the human condition:****What are the deeper issues of humanity that the tension in this story surfaces?**

THERE'S NOTHING INHERENTLY WRONG WITH CITIES OR TOWERS, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THEY ARE DEPENDING ON THOSE THINGS TO GIVE THEM SECURITY AND SIGNIFICANCE. THEY WANT THEM BADLY ENOUGH THAT THEY COMPLETELY IGNORE GOD'S COMMANDS. I THINK THIS SUGGESTS SOMETHING ABOUT HOW DEEPLY WE LONG FOR SECURITY AND SIGNIFICANCE AND HOW QUICKLY WE TEND TO LOOK FOR THEM IN OUR OWN EFFORTS RATHER THAN FROM GOD.

I THINK THIS IS WHAT GOD IS CHIEFLY CONCERNED ABOUT: OUR INCLINATION TO TRY TO MEET OUR DEEPEST NEEDS APART FROM HIM AND IN REBELLION AGAINST HIM.

## Expose the Problem

## Explore the Solution

**In this passage:****How does God begin to address the tension?**

A COMMENTARY SAID THE TOWER WAS A ZIGGURAT (A STEPPED-PYRAMID, NOT THE TALL SKINNY TOWER I IMAGINED). THEY WERE TRYING TO BUILD A STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN.

GOD DOES TWO THINGS. HE THWARTS THEIR TOWER-BUILDING BY CONFUSING THEIR LANGUAGE, RESCUING THEM FROM THE ILLUSION OF THEIR SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND COMPELLING THEM TO OBEY.

THEN LATER IN GENESIS 28:12 JACOB HAS A DREAM OF ANOTHER STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN, ONE THAT GOD BUILT ("JACOB'S LADDER"). THAT STAIRWAY BUILT BY HIM IS THE ONE HE WANTS THEM TO CLIMB SO THEY CAN LEARN THAT HE IS THE ONE WHO GIVES SECURITY AND SIGNIFICANCE.

**In Christ:****How does this narrative point to Christ's ultimate resolution?**

IN JOHN 1:51 JESUS SAYS THAT HE HIMSELF IS JACOB'S LADDER. THE ANGELS ASCEND AND DESCEND ON HIM.

JESUS IS THE REAL TOWER OF WHICH THE TOWER OF BABEL IS A FAILED AND FUTILE IMITATION. HE GIVES US SECURITY AND SIGNIFICANCE IN HIMSELF. HE IS THE PATHWAY TO HEAVEN, NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH HIM (JOHN 14:6).

THEY WERE TRYING TO FIND SECURITY AND SIGNIFICANCE BY BUILDING A STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN. THEY SHOULD HAVE TRUSTED GOD TO PROVIDE THAT STAIRWAY, WHICH HE DID THROUGH CHRIST'S DEATH.

**How do I identify with the characters' struggles with sin and suffering?**

THERE ARE LOTS OF TIMES I DISOBEY GOD'S COMMANDS BECAUSE I THINK I'LL BE MORE SECURE OR SIGNIFICANT IF I TAKE MATTERS INTO MY OWN HANDS.

I LIKE TO IMPRESS PEOPLE. IT'S LIKE THEIR APPROVAL IS THE CURRENCY I USE TO PAY OFF THE VOICES IN MY HEAD THAT DEMAND TRIBUTE AND ACCUSE ME OF NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH.

**In the last month, how have I embraced or resisted Christ's resolution?**

IT'S HARD FOR ME TO TRUST THAT GOD'S LOVE AND CHRIST'S DEATH ARE ENOUGH. I FEEL COMPELLED TO BE EXTRAORDINARY IN SOME WAY, EVEN IF IT MEANS DISOBEYING. OFTEN MY NAME AND REPUTATION ARE MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN GOD'S.

I DON'T THINK HE DESPISES MY DESIRE TO BE SECURE AND SIGNIFICANT, BUT WHEN I'M BUILDING TOWERS I'M NOT LOOKING FOR THOSE THINGS IN HIM.

**How is the Spirit calling me to respond?**

I NEED TO BELIEVE IN MY CORE THAT JESUS IS MY STRONG TOWER. PROVERBS 18:10.

MEMORIZE AND DWELL ON GAL 2:20. HE LOVES ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME. I DON'T NEED TO WIN HIS OR ANYONE'S APPROVAL. I SHOULD WATCH FOR THE SUBTLE THINGS I DO TO BUILD TOWERS SO I CAN REPENT OF THEM.



4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” 6 Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned,

for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

**Numbers 21:4-9**

What are some key observations?

In this passage:  
What character flaws or difficulties are presented?

Expose the Problem

Explore the Solution

In this passage:  
How does God begin to address the tension?

How do I identify with the characters' struggles with sin and suffering?

Is there anything unusual, confusing, or surprising?

In the human condition:  
What are the deeper issues of humanity that the tension in this story surfaces?

In Christ:  
How does this narrative point to Christ's ultimate resolution?

In the last month, how have I embraced or resisted Christ's resolution?

What's the main plot, argument, or idea?

How is the Spirit calling me to respond?