

The Creation to Culmination Story (A Summary of the Bible's Storyline)

I would like to share with you a story that is changing the lives of people throughout the world. This is the story of the Bible – the story of the Most High God and his relationship with mankind. You can believe this story because God told it Himself.

PART 1 – Created to Enjoy God

Creator: There is only one God, the Most High God. He is more powerful than any person, any government, or any god. He existed in the beginning before there was anything else. The Most High God created everything on earth and in heaven to show what He is like. When God began to create, He simply spoke - and everything came into being. He created everything we see -- sky, land, mountains, oceans, sun, moon, stars, plants and animals. He also created angels to serve Him. Finally, He created man according to His image; He made them male and female. God created man to enjoy all that He created – and, most of all, to enjoy God Himself. God looked on all that He had created, and saw that it was very good.

God and Man in Relationship: God placed the man and woman in a beautiful garden to keep it and to enjoy it. He gave them one special command: they could eat from every tree in the garden except one. If they ate from the fruit of that tree, they would die. The man and woman listened to God. They delighted in God, and trusted that He had provided them with everything good. **God created us to enjoy Him forever and to display what He is like!**

PART 2 – People are Separated from God

The Fall of the Devil: One of the angels, however, became very proud. He desired worship that only God Himself deserved. Therefore God threw this disobedient angel and his followers out of heaven. He is the devil, Satan, and his followers are demons.

The Fall of Man: One day, the devil tempted the woman to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree, telling her that she would become like God if she ate it. The woman then distrusted God. Desiring to become like God, she rejected Him, listened to the devil, and ate the fruit. Her husband was with her, but he did nothing to stop her. He too distrusted God and ate what was forbidden. They thought that they knew better than God what was good for them. This **arrogance and distrust is sin; any disobedience to God's command is sin.** God is righteous and holy; as the moral authority in the universe, He must punish sin. God then cast the man and the woman out of the garden, out of His presence. Their relationship to God was broken; so was their relationship to each other.

All Have Sinned: Like the first man and woman, all of us have sinned by distrusting God and disobeying His commands. We too are separated from God. The result of sin is eternal punishment in hell. **We therefore cannot enjoy God forever and display what He is like.**

PART 3 – God Begins His Plan to Reconcile Men to Him

God's Plan: God could have killed the man and the woman immediately when they ate the fruit, but in His mercy He made a promise: a descendant of the woman would be harmed by Satan, but in the end would crush him. The woman thought her firstborn son would fulfill this promise, but instead he became the first murderer. God would fulfill His plan in His own time.

Abraham: About 4000 years ago, God called a man He later named Abraham. He promised that all peoples on earth would be blessed through His descendant. Abraham waited many years to have a child, but after that was no longer physically possible, God miraculously gave him a son, Isaac. God repeated His promise to Isaac and to Isaac's second son, Jacob: Through their descendant, all peoples on earth will be blessed.

PART 4 – Law and Sacrifices

Rescued from Egypt: God miraculously led Jacob and his sons into Egypt. Over 400 years, they multiplied to millions of people. The Egyptian rulers, fearing their increasing numbers, enslaved them and tried to destroy them as a people. God showed His great power by taking them out of slavery through His servant Moses, and bringing them to a mountain called Sinai to worship Him. He then told them He brought them to Himself to be His treasured possession. He says that since He is holy, they too as His people must be holy.

Commandments: He then gives the people Ten Commandments to help them to understand what it means to be holy like He is. Some of

the commands are: Do not worship other gods or make idols; honor your parents; do not steal, murder or commit adultery. All God's commandments are summed up in two statements: You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Sacrifices: God also sets up a system of animal sacrifices, graciously giving the people a way to restore their relationship with Him and with one another when they break His commandments. He tells them that **sin must lead to death, the shedding of blood.** God alone can provide a substitute for their blood, if they follow His method of getting right with Him. To picture this substitute, God required them to kill a perfect animal, like a lamb. **We cannot come back to God on our own no matter what we do.**

A Disobedient People, a Faithful God: Just a few weeks after God gives the Ten Commandments, the people rebel and worship an idol. God is ready to destroy them. But Moses appeals to God based on His promises to Abraham, and God does not destroy the people.

PART 5 – The Coming King, the Coming Savior

The Promise to King David: Hundreds of years later, God raises up a king named David from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promises that his kingdom will endure forever through his offspring.

Wrong Sacrifices: David's son Solomon builds a temple for God. But even Solomon in his old age worships other gods in addition to the one true God. The people of Israel continue to offer sacrifices for their sins, but many do this only as a ritual; they love neither God nor their fellow man. And God tells them time and again that He hates such meaningless sacrifices.

The Promise of a Coming Savior: God sends a number of prophets to His people to call them to repentance, and to tell them more about His promises. They say that God will destroy the very temple of Solomon because of the evil the people are committing. And God does destroy that temple. However, many of the prophets speak of a coming King, a Son of David, who will right all wrongs, bringing in an era of righteousness and peace. One prophet, Isaiah, also speaks of a coming servant who will suffer and die, shedding His blood to pay for the sins of the people. **God promises that David's and Abraham's descendant will pay for sin and reign as King forever.**

PART 6 – Jesus Comes to Earth

God Sends Jesus: When all was ready, God sent an angel named Gabriel to appear to a young woman named Mary. He told her that she would become pregnant, though she had never had sexual relations. Therefore the child would be called the Son of the Most High God. She did give birth, and called His name Jesus. He was the promised descendant of King David.

Teacher: When Jesus was on earth, He was a wise teacher. He astonished many, for He taught with authority.

Storm: Jesus was also a powerful **miracle worker.** Once a storm arose while He was crossing a large lake with some of His followers. The followers thought they would die. But Jesus simply said, "Quiet! Be still!" Immediately the storm stopped. **Jesus' power is greater than the power of nature.**

Feed 5000: On another occasion over 5,000 people came to listen to Jesus teach about God. When evening came they had not eaten and were hungry. Altogether they only had five loaves of bread and two fish. But Jesus fed all the people from this small amount. **Jesus' power is able to satisfy man's needs.**

Demon-possessed Man: Another time, Jesus saw a man with many demons inside him. The man was very powerful and dangerous. Yet Jesus loved the man and cast the demons out of him. **Jesus is more powerful than the evil spiritual world.**

Raising the Dead: On another occasion, Jesus' good friend became sick and died. Jesus was not with him. Several days later Jesus arrived at His friend's house. Jesus felt very sad. His friend was already in the tomb. Jesus went to the front of the tomb and said, "Come out!" His friend walked out of the tomb alive! **Jesus' power is even greater than death.**

The Perfect, Sinless Life: Jesus never committed a sin. That is, every minute of every day He loved God with all His heart, all His soul, all His mind, and all His strength. And He loved every person He encountered

as He loved Himself. All of His teachings, all of His powerful acts, display this love. ***Of all humanity, only Jesus never deserved punishment for sin.***

PART 7 – Jesus, The Perfect Sacrifice

Arrest: The religious leaders were jealous of Jesus. These men sent soldiers to arrest Him at night. When they said they were seeking Jesus, He replied, "I am He." The soldiers drew back and fell to the ground. But Jesus nevertheless went with them voluntarily. The religious leaders took Him before the governor, because they did not have authority to put Him to death. The governor declared Him innocent, but, under pressure from a mob, agreed to execute Him.

The Cross: After whipping Him and mocking Him, the governor's soldiers nailed His hands and His feet to a cross (two large pieces of wood, shaped in a "T"). He suffered much. His blood flowed down. Quoting one of David's poems that prophesied His death, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" Then, when all was accomplished, He cried out, "It is finished!" and gave up His spirit.

Substitute: In dying on the cross, Jesus accomplished what every animal sacrifice had foreshadowed. He was the perfect sacrifice. His death paid the penalty we deserved, since He deserved no punishment. He thus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of a suffering servant. God shows His love for us in sending His beloved Son to die for us when we deserve His punishment.

PART 8 – He Lives!

Resurrection: After Jesus died, he was placed in a secure tomb. While He was still alive, He had told His followers that He would be killed, and on the third day would rise from the dead. They did not understand Him, and were not expecting Him to come to life. But that was what happened! Jesus rose from the dead, showing that He had conquered death. And the risen Jesus was flesh and blood, not just a spirit. His disciples touched Him; they even ate with Him. He spoke with them about His Kingdom for forty days. Then He ascended to His Father in heaven. ***Jesus' resurrection shows that the penalty He paid was sufficient to cover the sins of all who believe in Him.***

PART 9 – The Holy Spirit, the Worldwide Church, and Jesus' Promised Return

The Holy Spirit: Before Jesus ascended, He told the disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. With this power, they would be His witnesses throughout the world. A few days later, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples like flames of fire. They boldly and publicly proclaimed the mighty works of God. Though the people listening were from many different countries, they all heard the disciples speaking in their own language! One of the disciples, Peter, preached about Jesus, explaining that everything that happened to Jesus had been prophesied hundreds of years previously. He explained that Jesus was the long-promised descendant of David – and yet they had killed Him! They were cut to the heart and asked, "What shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Three thousand people repented and trusted in Jesus.

The Good News Spreads: Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples bore witness to Him in that city, and then among peoples far and wide. Many were beaten or imprisoned. Some were killed. But God began to fulfill His promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring, Jesus. Many believed in His Name.

Jesus' Promised Return: Before He died, Jesus had told His disciples that He would return with power and great glory. One of His disciples, John, saw a vision of those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation joyfully worshipping God and Jesus, fulfilling the promise to Abraham. He also heard loud voices in heaven proclaiming that God's

If You Do Come to God:

This entire story is summarized in one verse: "**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes [trusts] in him shall not perish but have eternal life**" (John 3:16). Remember that verse. Repeat it to yourself.

It is important now to meet with other believers, to read God's Word and to pray to Him regularly to grow in your new relationship with Him.

God's plan is not only to bring you to Himself but also to bring your family and friends *through you*. God invites your whole family to believe in Him. Go home and tell your family and friends this Good News. **Write down the names of at least five people you will tell this story to this week. Let's practice telling the story and pray for the people you will tell. If they decide to follow Jesus, train them to repeat the process the next week with five of their friends or family. I am giving you five copies of this lesson that you can give to them.**

I will meet again with you soon to see how you are doing, and I will train you in the next step in growing in your new relationship with God: *List here the names of five people:*

promise to David is fulfilled: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" In John's vision, King Jesus then fulfills the promise to the first woman by crushing Satan and condemning all people who have rejected Jesus' offer of salvation. But for His people, for those whose sins were covered by Jesus' sacrifice, God has prepared a new home. He promises to wipe every tear from their eyes, and to dwell with them as their God so that they might enjoy Him forever. Jesus promises, "Surely I am coming soon." ***Jesus is coming again to reign as King and to fulfill every promise of the Bible.***

PART 10 – The Lost Sons

Before He left the earth, Jesus told a story to his followers about a father and his sons.

A Son Leaves: The father had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the inheritance." The father gave it to him. He then took it all and set off for a distant country. There he wasted it all in wild living. After he had spent everything, he began to be in need. So he got a lowly job feeding pigs. He longed to eat the pigs' food, but no one gave him anything.

Comes to His Senses: One day he came to his senses. He said, "Even my father's servants have plenty to eat, and I'm starving! I will go back to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'"

Repents: So he returned to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

Restored: But before the son could finish, the father said to his servants, "Bring the best robe and dress him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And then let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

Unrepentant: But the older brother was angry when he found out. He told his father, "Look, I have worked as a slave for you so many years, and you never gave me anything! But when this evil son of yours came, you gave him a party!" His father replied, "Son, it is right to celebrate, for your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

PART 11: How To Be Reconciled to God

Jesus Brings Us Back: Every one of us is similar to the younger or the older son. We all have rejected God and have lived however we liked; or, we have pretended to serve Him, but have not loved Him, appreciated Him, or enjoyed Him. All of us thus are separated from Him and deserve His punishment. We all must repent of our sins, and return to God through Jesus. He alone offers the sacrifice to pay the penalty we deserve. When we come to God through Jesus, we will enjoy God forever and display what He is like – the very purpose of our creation.

Jesus said, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**" John 14:6

God's Command: God commands all men everywhere to repent. Not to repent is to be like the first man and woman: To say that you know better than God what is in your interest. That leads to the eternal punishment you deserve. But if you admit to God that you have sinned against Him, if you believe that Jesus died in your place, and if you desire to enjoy His love, then Jesus will open the way for you to be God's child forever. From that point on, God will be your great delight – and you will be His.

****So repent! And come to God through Jesus Christ.**