

Know and Tell

The Story of God

in

12 Stories

*“Go into the world. Go everywhere and announce
the Message of God’s good news to one and all.”*

Mark 16:15 - The Message

Leaders Guide



m. k. Jarvis
Bible Story of God.org

Acknowledgements

The Bible Story of God is a project of Bible Story of God.org and CBS4Kids.org especially developed by Kurt Jarvis and Marion Grant

This book is available as a free download for copying and distribution. Bible Story of God also produces other resources for church leaders, parents, teens and children which are available on request as free downloads.

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the gift, but it is up to each person to either take or reject that gift. Nicodemus was given that gift opportunity and received it.

Some people spend their whole life trying to work their way to heaven. The Bible clearly tells us there is nothing we can do; there are never enough good things we can do to have our sin forgiven. I John 1:9 says if we confess or tell God we have sinned and ask Him to forgive us, God will do that and we are then forgiven and made clean from all we have ever done. It is that easy and it does not matter if we are young or older, God is just waiting for us to believe in Him and when we believe, God takes us into His family.

Discussion:

- Why did Nicodemus have so much difficulty understanding what Jesus was trying to teach him?
- If doing good deeds would be the way to heaven, how many good deeds would a person have to do? How good is good enough?
- What religious system, other than Christianity, can you think of where a person only has to have faith to have access to heaven?
- If your life ended today, where would you be in your relationship with God? Would you already be part of God's family?
- Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?
- After reading these stories, do you now think differently about God?

Forward

The rise of Biblical illiteracy in America

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., the ninth president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary wrote in 2005 regarding the issue of biblical illiteracy, " Researchers George Gallup and Jim Castelli put the problem squarely: 'Americans revere the Bible--but, by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates.' Researchers tell us that it's worse than most could imagine.

- Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels.
- Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples.
- According to Barna Research Group, 60 percent of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments. 'No wonder people break the Ten Commandments all the time. They don't know what they are,' said George Barna, president of the firm.
- 82 percent of Americans believe "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse
- 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife
- A survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife
- A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham

Many thousands of years ago a scenario was played out. Review with me the words from the book of Judges, chapter 2, verse 10: *"After a whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what*

He had done for Israel. The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.”

The struggle between good and evil has been present even before recorded history and the creation of the world. We read that this struggle and conflict existed long before creation in the heavenlies when war broke out between Satan and his angel followers and God Himself. That story alone would be sufficient for a remake of Star Wars with special effects that could also mesmerize audiences.

The world remains in jeopardy with a generation that will “*know neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel.*” And the result will be similar, “*The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.*”

Without a spiritual moral compass the world indeed is doomed to a falling away from biblical principles of living. Is there any doubt that there is a need and urgency for telling the Biblical Story?

The verses in the book of Judges is a reminder of a similar fate our world is facing today, the need for a better society, a better world, hope for a better future, and rescue from a dark side of mankind. Those of us who know the message of the Bible, know where that hope lies. But we are living today in a world where the “dark side’ would have us forget God, forget His Word and soon forget the principles of living that are embodied in those sacred writings.

Kurt Jarvis

when he stated those who have established their faith in Christ become part of God’s families and are “*heirs of God.*” Paul makes it clear that only those who have established this type of faith are those heirs, this is not a blanket kinship of all mankind.

This is the very pivotal point of all faith systems, how we become justified or right with God. For those who do not know the living God, their faith is based on following rules, doing good deeds, on works of prayers and sacrifices, always trying to win their god’s favor. The Bible clearly tells us there is nothing we can do ourselves to make ourselves “right” with God, it is not what we do it is what God has already done when He gave His only Son, Christ, as the payment for our sin or rebellion against God. The acceptance of that gift from God is what places us in God’s family and assures us of eternity in heaven. (John 14:2)

Once we make this faith commitment and establish that relationship, we become adopted sons and daughters of God; we become part of His family.

It all seems so easy but it is amazing how many people never believe in Christ and accept God’s gift and consequently never become part of God’s family. And some ask how a loving God could condemn people to an eternity outside of heaven. Yet it is not God who makes this choice, it is man. God has already given

We know from further scripture passages that Nicodemus finally “got it” and became a believer, even later defending Jesus before other religious leaders who were attacking Jesus and His teaching. (John 7:50, 51)

When we acknowledge our sin condition, recognize the gift that God gave us in Christ as the sacrifice for our sin and ask God to forgive us, God forgives us. It is just like starting our life all over again – we are “born again,” but this time we are born into God’s family. (1 John 1:9)

In the very beginning God created Adam and Eve and at the same time established the concept of family. God’s concept of family permeates all scripture and is shown later in clans and tribes and in numerous Old Testament illustrations and later with Jesus in His teachings. Jesus talked often about all of us becoming a child of God, another example of family.

This helps us to understand the spiritual aspect of family and how God desires all of us to become children in His family. That relationship is not automatic as is clearly indicated in Jesus’ teachings. All life spiritual paths do not lead to the same God as many would have us believe. Jesus said He was the way, the truth and the life and that no one would come to the Father except through Him. He could not make this any clearer. In the book of Romans, chapter 8, the Apostle Paul refers to this relationship

Jesus final instructions to all of us

As Jesus gathered His followers on the hill before He ascended into Heaven, He gave specific last instructions. This is what He said: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:19, 20

Tell-A-Story: Telling others is teaching the Story of God and it is so easy. Become familiar with just the 12 stories in this booklet by reading them over to yourself several times. Consider taking this on as a personal learning project and in just a week or two familiarize yourself with just one story a day, reading it in the morning and evening or when you have some extra time. Think on the questions and begin developing your own additional questions for discussion with another person about each story.

Discover story sharing as a way to tell other people about God. Everyone loves to hear and tell stories. We do this every day in our interactions with others. Use this interest in storytelling to share with others what you will discover as the personal joy of sharing the Story of God with others. Just ask someone, *“Can I tell you a story?”* They will usually say, “Yes”. THAT! is your moment of opportunity to begin sharing the Story of God.

Show them the Bible story symbols on page 14 in this book and ask them which story they would like to hear. When they select, tell them that story. When you finish ask the person, “What did you find interesting about that story?” Use the other discussion starters and questions listed at the end of each story. Just ask questions and let others discover story treasures for themselves. Then wait and see if they ask to hear another story and continue telling as long as they are interested in listening. Let them take the lead to tell you if they want to hear more.

Some may want to hear only one story while others may want to hear them all. Only keep telling as long as they are interested. Sometimes people will ask you later to tell them another story. Let God use you to tell others His story according to their interest and attention.

Becoming Part of God's Family

Kurt Jarvis



Scripture: John 3:1-18

Passage for memorization and Biblical telling: John 3:1-18

A very religious man by the name of Nicodemus came to Jesus very late one night. He asked Jesus how he could become part of the Kingdom of God, essentially part of God's family. Jesus said that everyone who wants to be part of God's family must be born again. If you remember that story, Nicodemus did not understand this. He asked Jesus how anyone could go back and be born all over again. It sounded preposterous to Nicodemus that a person could be born again like a newborn baby.

Jesus then went on to describe to Nicodemus that a person needs to be born physically and also spiritually. Jesus added that this was a spiritual concept and told Nicodemus that since he was not even open to understanding earthly things Jesus had taught how could he possibly grasp these spiritual concepts. It was not that difficult but Nicodemus was so wrapped up in the law and being religious he was blinded to this truth that Jesus was trying to teach him.

Teaching Others to Tell the Story of God

Training others in the Bible storytelling approach is not that difficult. If you have taught anyone in a class in the past you can easily do this. Make your training session fun and just get everyone to relax. This training progression can even help the most timid person build confidence for telling others the Story and stories of God.

Promote that you are going to have a storytelling workshop. People love storytelling and it seldom is difficult to get people to sign up for this kind of workshop. Your workshop time will be about 1 ½ hours.

Telling a Bible story: For effective learning of Bible stories when the story is first introduced the story should be told in at least two ways with a follow up discussion time after the second telling. Use a variety of storytelling techniques to make the telling time an exciting and memorable learning experience. This is the CBS4Kids approach of Bible storytelling and it also works well with adults. I like getting people involved right away in the storytelling process.

The training session is in eight segments:

1. Welcome and opening., Plan an ice breaker activity to get everyone in the session to relax and get to know others. There are many ice breaker activities listed on the internet. Just find one that seems like fun and use it.

2. First telling: Select a story from his book to use for this workshop. If you are the workshop leader, prepare your story well. Read it over several times. Become very familiar with the story details. Read and reread the story in the Bible selection listed.

After the ice breaker activity the leader tells the story with expression. Make sure you know the story. Tell the story without notes. Begin with your Bible in your hand, stating the story title and where in the Bible it is found. Lay your Bible aside (do NOT lay your Bible on the ground or floor) and tell the story. When you have completed the story, pick up your Bible and say “That is the story of _____” and close your Bible

3. Now, retell that same story but this time get members from your session involved. Tell the group you need volunteers and say they will have no speaking parts. That encourages people to respond.

Discussion

- What reactions do you have about many who recently have predicted the end of the world and spent millions of dollars to announce their predictions?
- Do you think the nations of the world are expecting Christ to return?
- Why do you think in God’s plan for the world He has not given a clear time frame for Christ to return to earth?
- Why the big secret that even the angles do not know?
- What world conditions can you think of that point toward Christ’s soon return?
- How do we prepare today for the return of Christ?

was getting close for His return. Then Jesus added there would be major earthquakes and other natural disasters and great famines where people could not get enough food. These would also be signs that the end of the world was getting close.

People all over the world would also grow in their hate for Christians and many Christians would be killed for their belief in Christ. We know that in certain countries today many people persecute Christians and make every attempt to destroy them.

Jesus also said some who say they are Christians will turn away from their faith and following God and some will even go against those who once were their friends and believe in Christ. This would be another sign that the end of the world was getting close.

Jesus added that many religious leaders will tell people lies about God and will convince people to believe things that are false. That is a primary reason why we must know what the Bible says so we know what is truth. If you want to get a good understanding of these things regarding end times read Matthew 24.

Yet Jesus said that no one, not even the angels of heaven know the time or date that He will return. This should inspire us to be prepared for His return at any moment. And while we are waiting, that does not mean resting on the back deck, it means daily living out our faith and being ready for Christ's return. In Matthew 25:1-13 there is a good description of those who are prepared for Christ, the Bride of the Church (Christ) to return and about those who are not prepared.

Select the number of people you need for whatever story you are telling (list of characters), assign character parts and ask them to pantomime the story as you tell it. Let them pantomime center stage as you tell the story from the side. Plan out your story in sections and give pause between story sections so those pantomiming can act out the segment.

4. Third telling: This is an important step as this step begins to release those in the session to feel comfortable participating in a telling experience.

Have all the workshop participants form groups of 3-5 right near where they are seated. No more than 5 in a group. In the safety where participants are in small groups of 3-5, this exercise reduces inhibitions as there is little pressure. The noise of everyone telling at once helps to break many storytelling barriers and fears.

Say to the group, **“Now, in your groups, when I say “Go” tell this same story I just told you to each other and try not to miss any of the story details. Take your time and everyone tell the story.”**

Give the groups 10-15 minutes where they tell the same story you have just told twice to the others in the group.

5. Fourth telling: Now call the workshop class back together.

Ask if someone would volunteer to stand right where they are and retell that same story to the entire workshop. You will almost always get someone who will volunteer. (A good technique to use to identify potential tellers is to move around the room while the telling is happening in the small break out groups and notice those who seem the most confident in telling.) If no one volunteers then ask from those you have identified if they would be willing to just tell that story.

6. Story Checking: This is where effective Bible storytelling happens. In this workshop segment you now ask the group to help you determine the accuracy of the story. The story has now been told more than four times.

Discuss with the group the importance of Bible storytelling accuracy. Ask the group these questions:

- From any of the telling times did you notice any story facts that were not accurate? If so, what inaccuracies did you notice.
- (as each inaccuracy is cited ask) How important was that fact to the integrity of the story?
- If that inaccuracy were told in a group who never had heard that Bible story before how do you think that could impact them? What misimpression might they walk away with?

Jesus Will Return

Kurt Jarvis

Scripture: Matthew 24, Revelation 21



Can you recall predictions in recent years regarding the end of the world? Did you ever hear someone say Jesus is coming back to earth next week or on a certain date? If you did, don't believe it. The Bible is very clear that no one, not even Jesus Himself knows when He is coming back to earth. Only God, the heavenly Father knows the time and day. But, while we are waiting God has a job for us to do. God wants us to be about living out our Christian faith and telling others about Christ.

One day Jesus was with His disciples sitting on the Mount of Olives when He reminded His disciples that a time would come when the world would end and God would make a new heaven and a new earth. The disciples asked Jesus when these things would happen.

Jesus told them even He did not know the day or time but that certain things would occur that would be signs that the end of the present world was coming. First, Jesus said that many people would come and say they were the real Son of God. If you hear someone say this do not believe him or her. When Jesus returns to earth God will announce it and everyone living will know for sure it is the real Christ returning. The Bible makes that very clear.

Jesus also said there would be constant news about wars happening around the world. This would be a sign that the time

- What can we do to insure that we “get the story straight” before we ever tell it?

7. Story Discovery: Every Bible story has a “truth” or life principle that God wants us to learn or know. It is important that as storytellers that we do not give the listener the answer, rather we guide the listener to discover the Bible truth for themselves.

Use the questions from the end of the story you used and ask the workshop class those same questions. You might also want to select from any of the following questions that would be appropriate to the story you selected.

Ask questions such:

- Ask “How do you think _____ felt when _____
- What do we know about _____
- What don’t we know about _____
- Where does this story take place?
- What are the life circumstances of the people in this story?
- What do you think God / Jesus is trying to teach those in the story?
- What do you think God is trying to teach us though this story?
- What did you learn from this story that you did not know before?

- How has this story made an impact on you?
- Did God speak to you in a special way through this story?
- If you were _____ in this story, what would you have done or how might you have reacted

Share the following with the workshop group:

Asking the right questions can help the entire group discover the truth God has for them. Every Bible story can speak differently to each person according to their background, knowledge, needs, life circumstance, etc. Never assume you know the story “point” they need to take from that story. Sometimes God will use a story to speak very uniquely to one person in the storytelling session from all others present.

In **Story Discovery** try not to ask questions that have a "yes" or "no" answer. Ask questions that dig into the story setting, the characters in the story, where the story characters are spiritually in their relationship to God, what we know and don't know about the story characters, etc.

8. Bible storying (chronological) approach: In the Bible storying approach the stories are told chronologically to help the listener not only learn the stories of the Bible but also to gain an understanding to the relationship each story to the stories before and the stories that follow. God is at work in mankind from

right there in the room where they had gathered and the disciples now knew for sure that Jesus had come back to life.

In the book of beginnings, Genesis 3:15 tells us of a promise. That promise says that Jesus would one day conquer over Satan's plan. Satan did not want Christ to be resurrected. When Jesus was crucified and died, Satan thought he had won his battle with God and that Jesus was now destroyed. But when God raised Jesus from the dead this was proof that God had final power over Satan. Christ had made the full payment for sin for all mankind and had conquered death.

Story Questions and Discussion:

- Why do you think the disciples were so confused?
- What might these happenings have meant to the religious leaders that spearheaded having Christ crucified?
- How might these events have impacted their religious leadership?
- Why was Christ's resurrection important in God's entire plan?
- What might you think was Pilate's reaction to this news?

taken Jesus' body away and she did not know where they had taken Him.

Then Mary turned around and looked and even though it was Jesus she did not recognize Him. She thought He was the gardener who took care of the graveyard. Then Jesus said to her, *"Why are you crying?"* She answered, (thinking He was the gardener) *"...if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him."*

Then Jesus just said her name, *"Mary."* At once she knew exactly that this was Jesus, the Messiah and she responded, *"Teacher!"*

Mary was so excited she ran and told the disciples she had seen the Lord and that she had talked with Him. She told Simon Peter and John, *"The Lord is not there. I found the stone rolled away."*

Peter and John raced to the tomb and saw for themselves and then returned to the city to tell the others that Jesus had come back to life.

There was talk all over Jerusalem that Jesus' body was gone from the tomb. Some people said He had come back to life like He said He would and others said His body had been stolen so that people would think He came back to life. People were very confused.

When the other disciples heard that Jesus was no longer in the tomb they shut themselves into a room out of fear that people would say they had stolen Jesus' body. They all wondered where Jesus had gone. Then a few days later Jesus appeared to them

Genesis through Revelation and up to today. It is a never-ending story of God and how He is involved in all our lives. Read Romans 1:20

You want your listeners to not only hear the stories but to learn the stories so they can become teller of the story and stories themselves.

In this storytelling approach each time you have a storytelling session you always review on or two stories from past learning sessions. Select volunteers from the group and ask them to tell a prior story and ALWAYS after the story is told have the group respond and check to make sure this story was told correctly. This does not have to be an embarrassing or threatening time. God expects us to "get His story straight" and therefore we must be accountable to one another as we tell His story.

You have now completed the basic storytelling workshop. Now, learn and go tell His story to others.

Storytelling Ideas

Telling the scripture stories can be an exciting, interactive involvement with the audience. Consider some of the following techniques to have some creative features to the storytelling or scripture presentation time whether as part of congregational worship or in teaching and telling situations.

- **Chants:** Make up chants that go along with a story and have the audience repeat the chant.

Example of Audience Chants

The Good Samaritan

Help me! Help me! Help me please!
I've been beaten and robbed by a bunch
of thieves
They took my money and they took my
clothes,
They punched me in the eye and they
broke my nose.

The Sower and The Seeds

Seeds in my pocket, seeds in the air
Seeds on the ground
Seeds everywhere.
Give the seeds some water and give
the seeds some sun,
Watch them grow, see what God has
done.

- **Audience Response:** Find a phrase that is repeated and have the audience repeat the phrase with you.

Example: David and Goliath

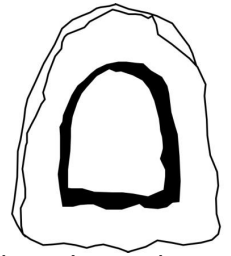
When you hear me say "David" section 1 says "He was young but brave" (and places hand over heart)

When you hear me say "Goliath" section 2 says, "He was a fearless warrior and he was strong" (and make a fist in the air)

Jesus Conquerors Death and Satan

Kurt Jarvis

Scripture: John 20:1-18, Genesis 3:15



When you read the Bible you find there are many verses in the Old Testament that mention about Jesus, the Messiah, one day coming to earth. Some of the Old Testament verses or prophecies were written 700 years before Jesus was even born. Yet all these prophecies came true; Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus was crucified, Jesus rose from the dead after three days. All things written about Him hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to earth happened just like the Bible stated they would. These are all proof verses that Jesus was the Son of God.

Now Mary Magdalene was a woman who had been possessed by many demons. She previously had the demons cast out and was grateful to Jesus and His disciples for the freedom she now had. After Jesus was crucified and buried, Mary, in mourning, went to the tomb to remember Jesus who had done so much for her.

It was three days after Jesus died that Mary went to the place where Jesus was buried. When she got there she was surprised to find the stone rolled away and to find Jesus was no longer in the tomb. Mary thought someone had taken Jesus' body and she was so disturbed she began to cry. While Mary stood there crying she saw two men surrounded by bright light. She was so confused she did not even know they were angels. They asked her why she was crying and Mary told them that someone had

When you hear me say “Philistines” Section 3 stand up and shouts, “We fear no one.”

- **Pantomime:** Let other story team members pantomime the story as you tell it.
- **Illustrating the Story:** Consider using paper cutting illustrations as you tell a story.
- **Audience Action:** Have the audience do an action. Split the audience and have one side raise their arms and be the waves in the lake when Jesus was asleep in the boat with His disciples. Have the other half be the waves on the other side of the boat. They all raise their hands and wave them back and forth at the appropriate time as you tell the story.
- **Puppet Story Presentation:** Use puppets to tell the story or have puppets pantomime the story while one person or player tells the story.
- **Freeze Frame Storytelling:** Use team members from your storytelling group. Develop the story into sections and develop a scene for each section. Pre-train the players of each scene. If possible, have a curtain on a pole that is raised from the floor between each “freeze” scene. As the story is told have two people raise the curtain between scenes as players form each “frozen in place” scene. If a curtain is not possible, have the audience close their eyes between scenes as players reset themselves.

Example: The Good Samaritan

- Scene 1: Freeze frame – One player - Traveler on road
- Scene 2: Freeze frame – Four players -Traveler and three robbers
- Scene 3: Freeze frame – One player - Travel lying along road side

Scene 4: Freeze frame – 2 players - Traveler asks Priest for help
 Scene 5: Freeze frame – 2 players - Traveler asks Levite for help
 Scene 6: Freeze frame – 2 players - Traveler gets help from Samaritan
 Scene 7: Freeze frame – 3 players - Samaritan with traveler at inn
 Scene 8: Freeze Frame – 3 players - Priest, Levite, Samaritan

- **Shadow Story:** Use a white cloth and light in back shining on players that act out the story or use silhouette figures and scene props cut out from card stock and glued on thin dowel sticks (available from Wal-Mart or craft stores to make and props).
- **Storytelling line:** In this presentation style the story is told in scripture narrative form. The narrator and all the characters in the story stand in a line with their backs to the audience. They turn and face the audience only while speaking their story parts and when finished turn back around. If two characters are talking to each other, those two turn and face the audience for their parts but then “exit” the stage by turning back around.

Variation: In the story of creation you can have six characters and a narrator. The narrator begins telling and then each person, in turn, turns around to the audience and tells about their assigned day of creation. But – at the end of each day of creation have ALL characters turn and face the audience and say "And God saw all that He had made that day and it was good. And the evening and morning were the ____ day". Then they turn back around.

God. In addition, God needed to make this a true gift, something that man did not earn or deserve yet a gift man could accept by his own choice. This offer of a restored love relationship with God would not be by mandate.

When Jesus said on the cross at His last breath, “*It is finished,*” those words opened up heaven and eternity for anyone who would accept this gift by faith, confess their need for this gift and redemption, and enter into a restored relationship with God.

In a world of endless spiritual pain others seek this type of relationship with their god and this can never be achieved. In false faiths no one on their own can ever be “good enough,” or say enough prayers or do enough good deeds or give enough money. The living God not made of wood or stone has already completed the plan. The Gift, the greatest Gift of all the ages is right in front of us for the receiving.

Discussion

- As you read the Bible or even just the highlight stories in this book, what do you see as the big spiritual picture of God and mankind?
- Why do you think Satan continues to try to interrupt the plan of God when the ending has already been written?
- Where can man find spiritual truth?
- Did you ever think that you had to “do something” to have a right relationship with God?
- What does this story tell you about your relationship with God today?

later Christ would come to earth to offer redemption for mankind and at the same time Satan would be making his strategic moves to thwart God's plan. God warned Satan in Genesis 3:14, 15 that though Satan would strike the offspring of woman (Christ) that Christ would crush him. (And He did with the resurrection)

While all this was happening God had already planned the greatest gift for mankind before the world was created. It was all part of God's plan so that no matter what happened to man, eventually mankind would be able to be spiritually restored with God and become part of the heavenly kingdom in eternal worship and fellowship. God created man to worship and honor his Creator and a rebellious army of angels would not destroy that plan. But this was going to require a major gift on the part of God as man, on his own, would not be able to restore the perfect relationship that existed in the Garden when God came daily to have fellowship with man and woman.

Once the spiritual fall occurred, a way needed to be made to "make things right" with God. In The Old Testament God established a system of blood sacrifice of animals as a way to cover sin and have forgiveness, but this was only a temporary measure. There still needed to be a more permanent fix for this. There needed to be a gifting of grace, a gifting of mercy and an ultimate sacrifice in order for man's sin to be forever forgiven and removed. That gift is a gift that man can never earn. That gift of mercy and grace would be God giving His only begotten Son, Christ, to take on Himself the sin of all mankind and be the perfect sacrifice, the perfect offering for all the ages past, present and to come.

God sent His Son to earth, to be both God and man, to be perfect and without sin and therefore to be also the perfect gift from a loving

12 LIFE CHANGING STORIES

The Bible Story of God

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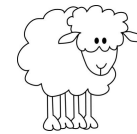
Trusted Source
2 Kings 22 – 23:1-3



Beginning
Genesis 1



Relationship Broken
Genesis 2:15-24



Test of Faith
Genesis 17:1-22



Ordinary People
Exodus 3:1-15



Promise Made
Isaiah 7:14 / 53:9 12



Promise Fulfilled
Luke 2:1-19



Who is He?
John 10:1- 18



It's a Gift
Mark 4:35-41



Victory
Luke 19:1-10



Return
Matthew 24, Revelation 21
John 18 - 20

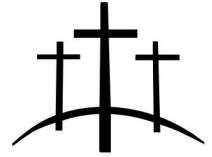


Belonging
John 3:1-18

It's a Gift

Kurt Jarvis

Scripture: John 18, 19; John 12:12-16,
Zechariah 9:9



The story of the crucifixion of Christ is one of the most portrayed stories over the course of history. Works of art stand and decorate walls in churches and museums the world over to remind mankind of this act of love and sacrifice.

Actually, the crucifixion story did not begin that day on the hill outside Jerusalem, but began even before the creation of the world. God is all knowing and though He had created Adam and Eve perfect, He did give mankind the power of choice and eventually man made wrong choices that broke their relationship with God. Mankind needed a way to have that relationship with God restored. Satan, previous to creation, had rebelled against God and he and his fellow rebellious angels had already been cast out of Heaven. So there was this behind the scenes battle going on and mankind would eventually get caught up in this as well.

In the very beginning of the story of man we have the situation in the Garden of Eden with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. We all know this story. Bad choices and the result was Adam and Eve being cast out of that perfect garden. And, as you recall, Satan was right there when all this was being played out, both behind the scenes and also center stage enticing Adam and Eve to disobey God. And when they did and judgment was pronounced, Satan was not excluded from that punishment. God knew at that very time that a day would come when this major confrontation between Satan and God would occur. Many years

The Bible Can Be Trusted

Kurt Jarvis



Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Kings 21:19-26

2 Kings 22: 1-13

In the book of 2 Kings, Chapter 21 and 22 we read a fascinating account of a changed life of not only a king, but the entire people in the kingdom of Israel. After several generations of rule by evil kings, a young boy, Josiah, just eight years old, became king of Israel. His father and his grandfather before him had fallen away from serving God and had not only disregarded God's law and permitted idol worship; they both participated in evil consulting with witches and sorcerers and sacrificing children to idols. But out of this evil and spiritually corrupt family heritage this young boy, Josiah, came to the throne. He began ruling with fairness and justice, but a reign empty of God's favor as the law of God had long been forgotten.

Then ten years later, at age twenty six Josiah decided to restore the temple that had been neglected for years. When the project began a worker found a copy of the scriptures of God that had been sealed away in a temple closet. The scrolls were brought to Josiah and when he had it read, it revealed the sin that all of Israel had been committing by disregarding the laws and worship of God. Not only did King Josiah fall on his face and humble himself before God in repentance, the revealed Word of God

changed Josiah's entire thinking and relationship with God and the way he would rule over the people of Israel. He then had the scripture writings of God read to all the people in open court. Everyone repented and returned to a right worship and relationship with God. Israel, as a nation, was spiritually restored. Read the story in 2 Kings 22. It demonstrates the power of just reading or hearing the Bible.

This story is an example of information that was received by people and trusted as truth. The most important issue with any religious book is this, "*Can the information be trusted?*" Think about it. Of the many books written, especially history, sometimes years later information comes to light that indicates blatant errors or misinformation.

At Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado the guides mention that recent major fires have uncovered literally thousands of previously unknown Anasazi Native American sites. Artifacts uncovered by the fires contradicted many earlier "facts" that were written in the Anasazi history. New information had invalidated the prior. It is important for every person to research to discover truth and not just take as truth what someone has said, written and published, no matter the writer's level of education or supposed authority to speak for God.

were with Him when people began to look for Him because they wanted to kill Him. They were with Him when most of the people turned against Him and when He died a terrible death on a cross. And after He had gone to heaven, they faced opposition by people who were suspicious of their faith in God and His son Jesus even after Jesus was no longer right there with Him. They could not control any of these things. But Jesus had prepared them by teaching them ahead of time to trust in God. Jesus was always there ready to rescue them, especially from themselves.

Discussion:

- What experiences have you had that were confusing, difficult or overwhelming?
- When have you felt a need for personal rescue? In those moments did you turn to Christ first or your own attempts at self rescue?
- Why do you suppose after all the time the disciples spent with Christ up to this point, in the time of crisis they did not first turn to Him?
- How do you think this real life lesson might have impacted the disciples in the future?

how out of control the disciples felt as the boat was rocked by the wind and they were drenched by the waves. The storm was so terrible they thought they were going to drown.

What about Jesus? Surprisingly, Jesus had gone to sleep in the boat, and on a pillow no less. He didn't get up even when the storm was at its worst. Terrified, His followers woke Him up, shouting "*Teacher, don't you care about us? We're going to drown! Save us!*" So Jesus got up. Amazingly, when He told the wind and the waves to be still, the wind died down, the waves subsided and complete calm descended over the lake. Then Jesus asked His followers why they were so afraid, "*Do you still have no faith?*"

It is interesting that Jesus had been teaching His followers and the people about the meaning of faith. One thing He said was that we should not worry about life. We cannot see God, but God knows all about us. He knows we need food and clothing. He also knows we need Him when life becomes difficult and even frightening. Jesus' followers were literally out at sea without an anchor. They need not only physical but spiritual rescue. They reacted at first with fear when something happened that they could not control even though Jesus was right there with them. But, then they realized Jesus was with them and that He would know what to do. The answer to their question "*don't you care about us?*" was "*Yes!*" This happened when they recognized that "*Surely, this Man is (really) the Son of God as even the wind and waves obey Him!*"

We know by studying history and the Bible that the followers of Jesus were being prepared for even more difficult times. They

The Bible, as a religious book of faith information, is different from any other book ever written. After years of the most intense scrutiny by the most educated researchers, here is the final scoop; Bible information has NEVER been proven to be inaccurate. If anything, continued archeological discoveries reveal and confirm more and more the accuracy of biblical writing. This is especially important as the Bible is compared to other religious books.

Moses is the first person mentioned in the Bible as writing anything and by genealogy tracing it can be documented that he lived around 1500 B.C. Moses is also held by Jewish historians as being the author of the first five books of the Bible. Other biblical writers and God Himself supports this authorship in later Bible passages.

There are two parts of the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is essentially the history of the beginning of all creation and is the earlier story of God's people. The New Testament is about the life of Christ, the beginning of the Christian church plus a description of Heaven, the end of this world, and the new world to come.

Altogether there are 66 small books in the Bible, 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. God used 40 different men to write the books of the entire Bible and they did

not all live at the same time. The entire Bible writing covers a span of 1,600 years. One of the greatest verifying facts of the accuracy of the Bible is this, though some writers lived hundreds of years before another writer, in many places in the Bible what a biblical writer stated was going to happen in the future, happened hundreds of years later. That is proof of something incredibly different about this book, the Bible, since only God who inspired the writers could have known that something stated that was going to happen, would happen.

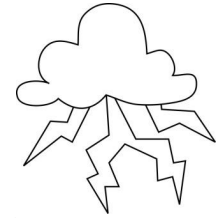
Of all the books ever written, all other books were written by a person except for this one book, the Bible. Men whom God inspired to write makes God the actual author of this book. (Research 2 Timothy 3:16, Matthew 4:4, 2 Peter 1:20, Hebrews 4:12)

When original biblical writings were transcribed by hand and copied over and over, early scribes checked and rechecked every stroke of the pen to make sure the words never changed during this process, thus preserving the accuracy of biblical writings. In A.D. 90 an official council of Jewish leaders put their seal of approval on the Old Testament books that had been accepted for the prior 500 years as being the accurate writings from God. That council of religious leaders confirmed those books as final and complete. The New Testament books were made official (canonized) around 90 A.D. after John wrote the last book.

Who is He?

Donna Ireland

Scripture: Mark 4:35-41



Studies of human behavior show that when we feel we have control over circumstances in our lives we are less stressed. When we feel we cannot control events around us we are the most stressed. One thing we all have in common is that we will face difficult and even overwhelming events in our lives. Our first response is often wishing we could control the problem life has thrown at us even when that is not possible. We may feel as if we were out at sea without an anchor.

The followers of Jesus were just like us. When they were faced with a frightening event, they panicked. It happened after a long day they spent with Jesus as Jesus taught a crowd of people by a large lake. Such a large crowd of people came because they had heard about Jesus and that He taught about life in a way they had never heard before. Like us, they had questions about God and what life is all about. Is God there even though we can't see Him? Does He care about us? They sensed that Jesus knew the answers to these and other looming questions.

It was a long day for Jesus and His followers. By the time Jesus had finished teaching it was evening. To escape the pressing crowd Jesus and His followers got into a boat planning to go to the other side of the lake to rest. The most frightening thing that can happen in a boat happened to them. A sudden and furious storm with high winds developed. Waves rose up and swept over the boat and the boat began breaking apart. You can imagine

To be confirmed (canonized) as official writings from God, all books had to pass certain tests of documentation that included; was the writer recognized as a prophet or associate of Christ? Does the book contain verifiable facts? Can the book be traced to the time and place of the writer? Has the book been accepted as divinely inspired by the people of God? When books passed this test they were determined accurate and officially inspired of God.

While there are many other religious books, this book, the Bible, definitely is different. In all other religions and religious books we see a pattern or requirement of people working to please or appease their god(s) through required rules, obligations, prayers, contributions, sacrifices, or good works. Their god or gods are viewed as angry beings needing to be appeased. The Bible is much different. The Bible is not about what man must “do” but what God has already done for all mankind. It is a book about God the Holy Spirit , His Son, Jesus, and information God intended for everyone to have in order to know Him and know His love for mankind. It is a book that tells the way for every man, woman and child to have a direct relationship with Him as a living, accessible God of acceptance and love, not a god of wood or stone. This book, the Bible, and the stories within have the power to change a person and also alter the course of man while journeying through life.

The Bible is how God communicates with us today; inviting us to personally know the Creator of the universe and how all mankind are unique creations for God's special purpose and plan. Most of all, this story of God, the written Bible, is the story of how much God loves us, no matter our past, our present, our culture, our race, our social status, education or our material wealth; God loves each one of us exactly the same.

This book, above all other books ever written is worthy of the type of investigation that will confirm its accuracy and validity in every detail. Most of all, the Bible can be trusted as truth and is open for anyone to search to discover that truth for themselves.

Bible references to investigate:

- Micah 5:2. Written 750 years before Jesus was born.
- Isaiah 7:1-14; 6:1-13; 9:6-7
- Numbers 12:6
- Deuteronomy 18:18,22

Discussion

- What do you find most interesting regarding this information about the Bible?
- What did this story tell you that you did not know before?
- How important to you is the accuracy of other religions or faith sources?
- Do you think you can know spiritual truth?

The shepherds hurried into town and found Jesus just as the angel had told them. Soon many others had heard that Jesus, the promised Messiah, had been born and the news began to spread.

God's Word is full of promises to us. God promises He will never leave us, never forsake us, and always be there for us. His promises can be counted on in being fulfilled.

Further promise research:

Check out the following prophecy-promises:

Micah 5:2	=	Matthew 2:1
Isaiah 7:14	=	Matthew 1:18
Jeremiah 31:15	=	Matthew 2:16
Isaiah 53:3	=	John 1:11
Zechariah 9:9	=	John 12:13,14
Zechariah 11:12	=	Matthew 26:15

Discussion

- What do you suppose Mary's family and faith background might have been for her to be submissive to the angel's announcement?
- Do you see any attempts in this story where Satan tried to interrupt God's plan? If so, describe the attempted roadblocks.
- What do you suppose were the reactions of Mary's and Joseph's family and friends to this situation?
- What acts of extreme courage do you see in this story?

that they should name Him Jesus. Both Mary and Joseph were amazed at what the angel said. Mary soon found out she was going to have a baby just as the angel had told her.

At about that time the ruler of the land, Caesar Augustus, made an announcement that everyone should go to the town where they were born and register. Caesar wanted to know how many people lived in the land because he wanted everyone to pay a tax.

By this time Mary was very pregnant and the trip was going to be very hard for them to make. Mary and Joseph went on their journey toward Bethlehem because that was Joseph's hometown where he and Mary had to register. When they got to Bethlehem Joseph could not find any place to stay overnight and Mary was about to give birth. Finally they found a place to keep warm in a barn in back of a small inn.

During the night Mary had her baby and since they were staying in the barn and makeshift quarters there was no infant crib. Mary and Joseph wrapped the baby in a small blanket and laid him in a manger normally used for hay for the cows and donkeys.

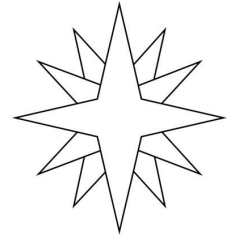
That night an angel came to shepherds who were taking care of sheep outside of town. The heavens were filled with bright light and singing and the shepherds fell down on the ground because they were terrified. The angels told them not to be afraid and then told them great news. They told the shepherds that the long awaited Savior, Jesus, had just been born and if they went into town to the inn they would find the new King there.

- Have you ever tried to verify other religious information for its accuracy?
- What might the first thing you would do to determine spiritual truth for yourself?

Promise Fulfilled

Kurt Jarvis

Scripture: Luke 2: 1-19



Many years before Christ was born God had promised the Messiah, His Son, Jesus, would come to earth. In the story of Adam and Eve God had to kill animals and make clothes for Adam and Eve as part of taking care of what happened when they disobeyed and sinned. From that time on animal sacrifices were a reminder to God's people of their sin and how much God loved them and was ready to forgive them.

During the Old Testament times God had made a way for people to have their sin covered by making sacrifices of animals and birds at the temple. The blood from the sacrificed animals was a symbol of the way God would forgive sin. For many years this was how sin was forgiven. But God had promised that one day He would send His Son, Jesus, to earth to become the once and for all time completed sacrifice for sin so that the Old Testament system of sacrifice would no longer have to be performed. This was all part of God's plan.

In the New Testament we read that one day an angel came to a young girl named Mary and told her that she would be the mother of God's Son. We have no idea why this Mary was chosen, but she had an awesome role to play in God's planning. Then an angel also came to Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, and told him that Mary would have a child that was conceived of God and

accurate. If a prophet claimed to speak for God and what they said did not happen, they were put to death. There is not one Bible prophecy that did not come true except for those predictions of things that have not yet happened.

In the Old Testament, hundreds of years before Jesus was born, two prophets of God predicted that the Messiah would come. Isaiah was a prophet of God and gave King Ahaz and all the Jewish people a promise from God. They predicted that one day a Messiah will be born and His name will be called Immanuel – the name that Jesus was called. This was over 700 years before Jesus was born.

Another prophet of the Old Testament also predicted about the future. This prophet was Micah. Micah also was a prophet who spoke for God and said Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). These predictions are just a few of many reminders that God has a plan for the entire world and God started His plan from the very beginning.

God not only sent His prophets, but He has given us the Bible, His Word, a guide to life that reminds us that all of what God said would happen, did, often many years later and what has not yet happened, one day will. This Bible, the Word of God, is the only trusted source when it comes to truth for today and the future.

Questions and Discussion

- Do some people today try predicting about things that will happen in the future?
- Do those predictions usually come true?
- Why are the Old Testament Bible verses important?

Beginning

Weldon Lemke

Scripture: Genesis 1 Psalm 90:4
2 Peter 3:8



How did it all begin? Why are we here? Where did mankind come from? Is it part of some greater design or the result of time and chance?

People have been asking these questions for thousands of years and people have come up with many different theories on how it all began. They want to know. Even as we continually learn more about the universe and the intricacies on how it all works and is put together, some things remain a mystery. For example, despite all the theories, no one really knows for sure what happened to the dinosaurs. No one can explain how the current variety of ecosystems came into place just exactly where they are.

Yet the Bible is not silent about the beginning. It does not leave us in doubt about the answers to those age old questions. The start of our world and mankind's place in it is described in the Scriptures and we can see much about who we are (and more importantly, who God is) as we read it. We believe that the Bible is trustworthy and true. We do not have the time and space right now to discuss this particular topic, but suffice it to say that the bible has been proved right time and again with regards to what is written in its pages. And so we go to the Bible to understand how it all began.

The Bible does not tell us every detail about creation. Yet what we learn about creation from its pages is astonishing but simple, compelling but understandable. It is here that we first see how the world began, and the special place every one of us has in the eyes of God.

We read in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, that God has always existed. He has always been there. Before there was earth, moon or stars, or even time God was there. The physical universe that we inhabit, including how we view time, was created by God. We live in a world of day and night and seasons, but with God we are told that one day is just like 1000 years and 1000 years is just like one day. And for reasons that only God knows, He decided to create this universe, our world and humankind. As we read how it all came into being, we see several things.

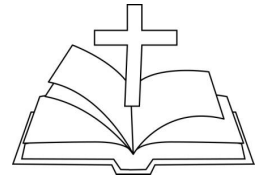
We see that God is immense. We are often awestruck by the complexity and vastness of just our planet and solar system, yet it is part of a universe that is so big, scientists really have no idea of its extent. The numbers of stars and the distances between them are mind boggling. And yet God is bigger than all of that.

We see that God is an intelligent and careful planner. The Bible tells us God created everything. He created light and darkness. He created the dry ground and the oceans. He created the mountains and the rivers and streams. He created the thousands of species of plants. God created the birds and animals and even the smallest insect. There is such tremendous variety in the living creatures of the world that scientists have estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of *species* of insects, as well as animals,

A Promised Made

Kurt Jarvis

Scripture: Isaiah, 7:1-14, 6:1-13, 9:6-7
Micah 5:2, Matthew 1:22-23, Matthew 16:16
Luke 1:26-38, John 1:41, Numbers 12:6,
Deuteronomy 18:18,22



In the story of the Wizard of Oz, in the beginning of that movie Dorothy is running away from home because a neighbor wanted to take her dog, Toto, and she arrived at a fortuneteller in a wagon who had a crystal glass ball. In that crystal ball the fortuneteller pretended to know about Dorothy's future. Later in that film the wicked witch also had a crystal ball where she could see Dorothy and what Dorothy and her friends were doing. But, that is just a Hollywood movie and we all know it is not real. Or do we?

In all parts of the world we will find similar fortunetellers today, for the right payment giving a person supposed knowledge of the future, communicate with someone deceased or give "for sure" financial advice. We all need to be reminded that God gives very specific warnings about these things, that they are not of God and someone trying to tell your future is not from God, but they are of Satan, the master deceiver.

Now, for the opposite of this, the Bible has thousands of prophecies that all came true. The prophets of the Old Testament wrote about things that would happen in the near future or hundreds of years later. The test of a true prophet of God was whether or not what they said came true 100% of the time. There was no allowance made for what they said not being 100%

bird and fish as well. There is nothing that you can see that God did not create.

We also see in the creation account that God is a loving God who intimately cares about each of us. He took six days to create all things and was pleased with what He made. He did not make any mistakes. We read that each day after He surveyed all He had made, he said to himself, *"This is good!"*

But He saved his masterpiece for last. Mankind was the last thing He created. He created Adam and Eve different from all other living things. They were made in God's image. Mankind was created with the capacity to love, serve and create. We can talk, communicate and be devoted to God in way that is unique. And the Bible records for us that when God surveyed Adam and Eve, He said to himself, *"This is VERY good!"*

God created us to have a relationship with Him. The designer and creator who created both the vastness of the cosmos as well as the smallest details of the atom, loves us and wants us to know Him personally. We were created to experience all the fullness and richness of that relationship with Him. It was not chance. It was not luck. It was designed. That is worth knowing!

Discussion

- What do people sometimes do when they do not know the answer to something?
- What do you think is the most unique creation of God?
- What does creation tell you about yourself?

the ordinary to accomplish the extra ordinary. Keep watch for what God has planned for you.

Check out Proverbs 16:19. This verse is an interesting thought for our individual spiritual life journey

Other Bible passages and stories to explore:

Genesis 37-50 Note: Genesis 50: 19,20

Discussion:

- What was Moses answer to God when God told Moses what He wanted Moses to do?
- Was Moses obedient right away?
- Do we sometimes give God reason why we don't obey?
- What was God's promise to Moses?
- How was Moses a special person?

God reminded Moses it was He who had given these instructions. Then, speaking or extraordinary, God gave Moses an example of some extraordinary things he could do with the walking staff Moses carried in his hand. These extraordinary demonstrations would demonstrate to Pharaoh who was sending Moses and that God had power to do anything. Right then and there God showed Moses some of these extraordinary feats.

Moses still made another excuse as to why he was not the best person for this assignment. He told God he was not a good speaker and would not be able to speak well in front of Pharaoh. God reminded Moses it was He who made Moses, it was he who made Moses' voice, and He could empower him for whatever he was being asked to do. Nevertheless, to help Moses with the task God had Moses' brother, Aaron, go along with Moses to do the talking with Pharaoh. God instructed He would tell Moses and Aaron what to say and reminded Moses He was with both of them. Moses finally complied with God's instructions and he and Aaron went for the summit meeting with Pharaoh.

When Moses and Aaron got before Pharaoh, God demonstrated many extraordinary feats through them that demonstrated God's power. Water in the rivers and streams was turned to blood, fleas and frogs inhabited the Egyptian land, darkness came over the entire nation and several other extraordinary events. And to think, God used a very ordinary man for a very extraordinary accomplishment.

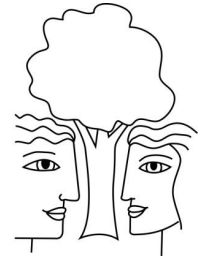
No matter whom we are, where we live, what we do, and whether or not we think we are just an "ordinary" person, God does use

Relationship Broken

Carol Wolfe

Scripture: Genesis 2:7, 15-24

Look at your fingertips, all ten fingerprints are the same. Amazingly every person's fingerprint is different from every other person in the world.



God created people distinctive from anything else created and each person created is different from everyone else that has ever been born or from anyone that ever will be born. Even identical twins have differences. They may look exactly the same, but there still are differences. Identical twins do not have the same brain so each one can think differently from his or her twin. Identical twins even have different fingerprints.

The first people God created were Adam and Eve. They were unique from everything else God created because they were created in God's image. In many ways we are like God; we can think, we can talk, and we can love others. We can also make decisions.

We can determine to be gracious to someone or we can decide to be unpleasant. We can decide to respect others or we can decide to be defiant. We can decide to love someone or we can decide not to love someone. People have the ability to make decisions and that makes them distinct from everything else that God created.

God saw everything created and said it was good. What God did in creating the world was amazing. No one could ever create what God made.

"Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7) And God named him Adam and he was different from everything else God had created. God's own breath was not breathed into fish or birds. God only put His breath into humans.

After God created Adam, God saw that Adam was lonely and needed someone like himself to talk to and be with. So God put Adam into a deep sleep and took one of Adam's ribs and from that God created a woman, Eve, to be his companion. I am sure they also both had fingerprints that were different from each other even though Eve was made from one of Adam's bones.

The garden where Adam and Eve lived was a perfect place. God provided everything they needed and gave them all the food they would ever need. But in the center of that garden was one tree that God said they could not eat from. That tree was called the tree of knowledge and the Lord God commanded them, *"You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."*(Genesis 2:16-17)

But there was also something else in that garden that was not so perfect and that was the evil serpent, Satan. He had a plan to deceive Adam and Eve into disobeying God.

God and said – *"Who am I that anyone would listen to me? I am not anyone special."* God encouraged Moses and said, *"I will be with you!"*

Moses pressed the issue even further and questioned God as to what he should say when Pharaoh asks who has sent him and who it was that said that he should let the Hebrew people leave Egypt. God said to tell Pharaoh **"I AM"** has sent him. That seemed strange to Moses as Pharaoh did not even believe in the living God. Why would Pharaoh let all the Hebrew people go just because someone named "I AM" said so? But, Moses had a relationship with God and knew this was not a dream, it was real. The command was clear and Moses was obedient, well, maybe not fully obedient right away. (sound familiar?)

Next Moses talked to the leaders of Israel about God's planning and the leaders agreed that Moses should do exactly what God told him to do. God also told Moses that at first Pharaoh would not let the people go and He would punish Pharaoh and the Egyptians so they would know who the true God was. Moses was to be assured that Pharaoh would eventually let them leave. But this situation had some complications.

Back to the game plan. Moses had yet a further conversation with God and started to give many excuses as to why he should not be the one to go to Pharaoh. Interesting, isn't it? Not unlike us when we have a pretty good idea of something we should do and begin rationalizing our way out. Moses just did not see himself as anyone extraordinary and that Pharaoh would listen to him.

Moses never thought he would have an extraordinary future. Well, at least not when he was a child. But God already had an extraordinary plan in mind for him, much different than Moses could ever imagine. And Moses would have no idea of that plan for many years.

When Moses became an adult he had left Pharaoh's palace, married within his Jewish nationality, became a shepherd and took care of his father-in-law's sheep. Nice life. He was happy with what he was doing; he was happy with his life and Moses continued being an everyday, ordinary country shepherd for many years. The extraordinary did not yet happen.

Life moved on and when Moses was 80 years old and out in the meadow with the sheep, he saw a bush burning in flames. He went over to the bush to investigate and the Bible describes as he went closer to the flaming bush he noticed the bush was not being consumed. Then a voice called to Moses from the burning bush. It was God speaking. Moses fell on his face before God.

God told Moses He heard the cries of suffering of the Hebrew people who were living in Egypt under the very cruel rule of now a different Pharaoh. God said He was going to do something extraordinary to help the Hebrew people, to rescue them. Then God added something Moses never expected. God told Moses he was the man chosen to help lead the Hebrews out of Egypt and that Moses should go to Pharaoh and tell Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people leave.

But wait a minute. Moses was 80 years old. He was no leader, he was an ordinary shepherd. So, pressing the issue, he questioned

One day Eve was walking past that tree that God said they should not eat the fruit and the serpent called to Eve and started talking to her about the beautiful garden. As the serpent, Satan, kept talking to Eve he pretended to notice the fruit tree and told Eve how delicious the fruit looked. Then he suggested that maybe Eve should try some because it looked so good. Eve knew the rule and said she and Adam were not allowed to eat the fruit from that tree or they would die.

Then the serpent told Eve the biggest lie ever told. He told Eve that what God said was not true. He told Eve if she ate that fruit she would not die but that she and Adam would be just like God and that they would know wonderful things that they never knew before.

Eve thought about what the serpent said and believed what he told her, she believed the lie. So Eve picked some of the fruit and she ate it. When she did, she now understood new things so she quickly took some of the fruit, told Adam about what the serpent had said and gave some of the fruit to Adam and he took the fruit and he also ate it. Once they both ate the fruit, they recognized that they were naked and they were ashamed. They experienced the guilt of sin; rebellion against God.

When God came to the garden, as He did almost every day to walk and talk with Adam and Eve, He could not find them where they usually met. So God called to them. Adam and Eve were hiding in the shrubs because now they knew they had disobeyed God. They finally came out from where they were and God asked them why they were hiding. Then they told God they were hiding

because they had no clothes and were naked and they were afraid.

Then God asked them if they disobeyed and ate the fruit He told them not to eat? Adam blamed Eve. He told God Eve gave him some of the fruit and he ate it. Then God looked at Eve and Eve blamed the serpent Satan. She told God the serpent told her to eat it and she did. It was the blame game. Adam and Eve never said to God they were sorry for disobeying. God was disappointed that Adam and Eve had disobeyed.

Because Adam and Eve disobeyed, God put them out of the garden, their perfect world, forever. God did this because there was another tree in the garden, which was called the tree of life and Adam and Eve could no longer be allowed to eat from that tree, because now their bodies would get old and someday they would die, just like God said they would.

The perfect world was not perfect any more. Like Adam and Eve we also fail God. With disobedience comes separation from God. God gives us freedom and the ability to know right from wrong and also the opportunity to have our relationship with Him restored.

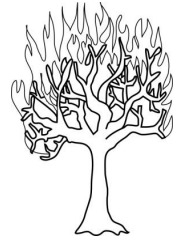
Discussion

- What are the differences between humankind and all other things God has created?
- What does it mean when we say that the garden was a perfect place?
- Why do you think Satan went after Eve first to deceive her instead of Adam?
- What was Satan's strategy to deceive Eve?

Ordinary People

Kurt Jarvis

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-4:18



Have you ever wondered what a famous person or maybe a person who accomplished some very unusual feat might have been like as a child?

What might they have been like before their accomplishment or rise to a prominent position? Chances are they were just an ordinary child that climbed trees, rode a bike or a little girl that played with dolls and had a puppy for a pet. There is a fascinating story in the Bible of such an ordinary person from the Old Testament that God used in an extraordinary way to fulfill His plan for His people.

When Moses was a boy the Israelites were in a desperate situation. God's rescue plan for them required an extraordinary and courageous leader. Years before this rescue was going to be needed God already knew how things were going to work out and knew exactly who He would use to work out His plan.

If you remember the Bible story of Moses' birth and being found at the river's edge by Pharaoh's daughter, that is just the beginning of such an incredible plan that God already had in mind years before the rescue would take place. Now as a child Moses had no idea that God had a plan for him when he would become an adult. Moses was just a boy from an ordinary Jewish family, raised in Pharaoh's palace and also by God's provision raised by his own mother who taught Moses to obey and worship the living God.

really what God wanted him to do, Abraham obeyed by setting out for the journey the following morning with Isaac and his servants. When they arrived at the mountain Abraham asked his servants to stay behind while he and Isaac went up to worship God. On an interesting note, when he left his servants Abraham made the statement to them, “*When we return*”, indicating to the reader somehow God was going to work out this looming disaster. Arriving at the top Abraham built an altar and tied up Isaac to prepare him as the sacrifice exactly as God had instructed. Then Abraham raised his knife but God called out, “*Abraham, Abraham, do not lay a hand on the boy.*”

God was pleased with Abraham’s faith that he would not hold out his only son Isaac. Then Abraham and Isaac heard a noise and in the bushes nearby there was a ram. God had provided the ram as a replacement for the sacrifice. (also a picture story of the eventual coming Messiah)

God repeated His blessing on Abraham because of his faith and trust and fulfilled His promise through him for a family larger in number than the stars of the heavens. Years later Isaac grew up, married and had many children and his children had many children and they had many children and years later there was so many descendants of Abraham that they were as the stars of the sky and the grains of sand on the beach, so many you could not count them. This was the very beginning of the Jewish people.

Questions and discussion:

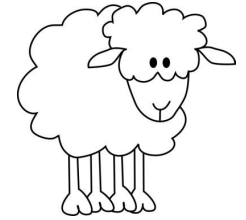
- Why did God choose Abraham?
- Why did God’s promise seem strange to Abraham?

- How are people deceived today into disobeying God?
- Why do you think we do not read about Adam and Eve being repentant for their disobedience?
- What were God’s expectations of Adam and Eve?

Test of Faith

Kurt Jarvis

Scripture: Genesis 21:1-19; 22:1-14



The story of Abraham is one of the most interesting stories of faith in the Old Testament. Abraham was a loyal follower of God with unwavering faith. He and his wife trusted God but there came a time when God wanted to test Abraham's faith and trust.

In the times of the Old Testament it was not uncommon on specific occasions God would speak directly to people. One day God spoke to Abraham and in that conversation promised to give Abraham a family that would be as many as the stars in the sky and as the grains of sand on the beach. Quite a numerical promise especially for a couple that was very old and childless. Yet God promised to make Abraham into a great nation with millions of descendants. This meant Abraham would have to trust God to fulfill what He promised.

Several years after this conversation, when Abraham was even older and still had no children, angels came to meet with him and reminded Abraham of God's promise for a large family. Abraham could hardly believe this could still happen as he was now even older, 99 years old to be exact. But God made His promise and God keeps His promises. And exactly one year later, when Abraham was 100 years old, he became the father of a son that he named Isaac. Abraham loved Isaac more than anything next to God and this is when God tested Abraham's faith.

Sometime later when Isaac was an older God spoke again directly to Abraham and told him to take Isaac to a special mountain and there to sacrifice him as an offering. Without evening questioning if this was