

**FROM  
GARDEN**



*to* **GLORY**

**COURTNEY DOCTOR**



**HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS**  
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## **From Garden to Glory**

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For my mom, Mary Ellen Randall.  
You have shown me how to keep my eyes  
on the big picture and trust the One who holds the  
whole story together from beginning to end.  
I love you.

*“The LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.”*

—PSALM 100:5

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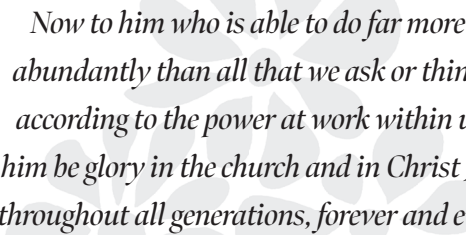
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*Now to him who is able to do far more  
abundantly than all that we ask or think,  
according to the power at work within us,  
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus  
throughout all generations, forever and ever.*

*Amen.*

EPHESIANS 3:20-21



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## FOREWORD NANCY GUTHRIE

**T**he collective voice of the world around us and the instinctual voice inside us teaches us to think and say, “My life is about me—who I am, what I will do, what I will accomplish and become.” We think this is empowering and freeing. But it can also be defeating. The truth is, we are limited. Our lives are fragile. We fail. So it is actually very good news that our lives are not defined by our own accomplishments or failures, by what we’ve made happen or what has happened to us, by what we’ve consumed or what has consumed us. The good news of gospel is that if we are joined to Christ, our lives are defined by who Christ is, by what Christ has accomplished, and is yet to accomplish in the future. It is his story that gives meaning and purpose and hope to our stories. This means that we really need to know his story. We need to understand how his story has developed to this point in history, where we are in the story, and what is yet to come. That is what *From Garden to Glory* does for us. It brings together our bits of Bible knowledge into a cohesive storyline that helps us make sense of the Bible and make sense of our lives.

In this book, Courtney Doctor ably grounds our understanding of what this beautiful and yet broken world is all about in what happened in the Garden of Eden. It anchors our understanding of our need for salvation in the salvation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. It feeds our hope of living in a world under a just government and righteous ruler in God’s gift of a king. It explains our longing for a future and a home and relationship in the future home and the relationship God set out to restore to his people after they forfeited that

home and relationship in the first garden. This ancient story answers some of the most significant questions in our lives. It explains what we were made for and therefore why we feel so much joy when we're fulfilling that purpose. It also explains why we experience so much pain, frustration, and sorrow in this life even as it sets our hope on a day in the future when that pain, frustration, and sorrow will be a thing of the past.

Every good story has a crisis. And the crisis in this story is the impact of Adam's sin on all of humanity. Every good story also comes to a climax. And, oh, what an incredible climax the story of the Bible comes to in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! In *From Garden to Glory*, we get more than a vague sense of what that means as Courtney pulls back the curtain of the simple phrase "Jesus saves," enabling us to see the way Jesus saves in specifics. We see what it means for us that he is the Second Adam. We see how in his death and resurrection he reconciled us to God, redeemed us from slavery to sin, offered himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for sin and overcame the serpent and his evil.

Seeing what Jesus did to accomplish our salvation in his first coming increases our love for him. And catching a glimpse of how he will bring us into the fullness of that salvation when he comes again makes us long for him! We say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

This is a story that resolves into glory—the glory we long for, the glory we were made for. I hope you will take in the wonder of the story Courtney so helpfully articulates on the pages to come. May it saturate your thinking about your own story so that you will more clearly see what it means that you have been united to him by faith. May it increase your longing for the glory to come.

In anticipation of the greater garden and the unending glory to come.

—Nancy Guthrie



## WHY THIS BOOK?

**F**or many of us, the Bible is a somewhat mysterious book. I look back and realize that, as a child, I was fairly superstitious about it. I owned a small, white leather Bible with a zippered cover. My grandmother brought it to me from Israel, which only added to its mystery. I put it on a special shelf, by itself, and I certainly never put other books on top of it! I rarely took it off that shelf; but when I did, I would ceremoniously open it and hope somehow the “magic” verse would appear before me. I had great reverence for the Bible, but no love of it. I suspected it held deep mysteries and even treasures, although I had no idea what it was about. But what I now know is that God has given us his Word not to *be* a mystery, but to *reveal* mystery.

God is mysterious, but he has given us his Word to reveal himself—make himself known—to us. He does not merely make a list of his attributes in order that we would know *about* him (i.e., I am holy, eternal, powerful, good, loving, etc.). Instead, he recorded a story that both tells us who he is and shows us what he is like. For example, he tells us he is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (Exodus 34:6), and then he shows us throughout the story that he is merciful, gracious, loving, and slow to anger with the rebellious Israelites—and ultimately, with us—by sending Jesus! The whole Bible is a story about God, and it has been given to us so that we can know him—not just about him, but know him personally.

The Bible is a book that is meant to be read, understood, loved, and applied. As we learn about God, we also learn about us. We learn who we are, who we were created to be, and how we are to live. We learn that God is holy and we are not; we learn that he is omnipotent and we are dependent; we learn that he is the redeemer and we are the ones who need to be redeemed. And we learn that, because we are created in his image and are meant to multiply that image throughout the world, we have meaning, purpose, and significance. As we read this story, we are learning not just about God, but about ourselves, our purpose, and even our final destiny.

But when it comes to reading the Bible, it's not always easy to know where to start. If we're not supposed to just open the Bible and hope the perfect verse will appear before our eyes, then how should we approach it? My hope is that this book will help us answer that question. This is an overview of the whole story the Bible tells—a story that begins in a garden and ends in glory. It is a 30,000-foot view of the grand sweep of redemption. We are going to “fly over” the story in such a way that we can look at it in its entirety, from beginning to end.

Every chapter has a Scripture passage for you to memorize. There is a page at the end of the book on which you'll have the opportunity to write each passage from memory. Memorizing these verses will help you to hide God's Word in your heart, and enable you to remember and more easily share God's redemptive story with others.

As we look at the story from this 30,000-foot perspective, I pray four things will happen. First, that the Bible will become less mysterious and more loved as we learn to read it as the story it is. The individual parts will make sense only when they are read in light of the entire story. Second, that your hunger for the Word of God will grow as you discover how amazing and brilliant this story

is. We will see how it began, how it ends, and how the pieces in between fit together. I hope that you will experience a spark that ignites a passion for studying God's Word, as well as gain a tool that will equip you in that study. Third, I pray that you will come to a greater understanding of your own value and significance as you come to a deeper appreciation of how your life is wrapped up in this story. The Author invites you to know this great story, enter into it, and share it with others because this story is your story too. This story is meant to change your story. And fourth, I pray that the God of the Bible—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—will be exalted, proclaimed, and worshipped because of our time together in his Word.







## YOUR INVITATION TO JOIN THE GREATEST DRAMA OF ALL TIME

If you've seen *The Passion of the Christ*, you know that it evokes strong emotions. This movie tells the story of the brutal 24 hours surrounding Jesus's crucifixion. When it was first released, most people were so moved by the depiction of Christ's sufferings that they left the theater either in silence or tears—or both. Some said that they didn't (or couldn't) talk to anyone until the next day.

But not everyone felt that way. One young man, when interviewed and asked about his reaction to the movie, reflected sincerely and said, "I guess it was okay, but it didn't have much of a plot." That might strike some of us as funny at first, and as tragic once we let his comment sink in. But he has a point.

If you grew up in the church or went to Sunday school as a child, when you saw *The Passion*, you sat down in the theater knowing the movie was picking up a storyline that was already underway. You knew most of the back story. But for this young man, it was like going to see *Tangled* (Disney's version of the Rapunzel story) and only viewing the part where Rapunzel was rescued from the tower. If you didn't know why she was in the tower in the first place or what was going to happen to her now that she was out, your understanding would be diminished. Or it would be like watching *The Lord of the Rings* and only seeing the scene where Frodo and Sam struggle up the mountain and throw the

ring into the pit of fire. Surely, you would wonder why the struggle was so difficult and why disposing of the ring was so necessary.

Maybe you didn't grow up hearing what Paul Harvey called "the rest of the story," and, like the young moviegoer, wonder what difference the horrible and gruesome death of a man on a cross more than 2,000 years ago could possibly make to you. Well, if that is the case, have I got a story for you!

But for those of us who did grow up hearing the backstory, before we either chuckle or roll our eyes at this young man, we need to stop and think about how, so often, we explain our Christian faith to others in a way that perpetuates this truncated version of the story. If you are like me, you have probably been taught to share your faith by explaining, "Jesus died on the cross to forgive us of our sins and take us to live with him in heaven for all eternity." And that is true. But it's far from all! We are living in the middle of the greatest drama of all time, and the Bible is the recording of how this great story began—as well as how it will end.

Herman Bavinck, a Dutch theologian in the 1800s, summed it up this way: "The essence of the Christian religion is this, that the creation of the Father, devastated by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God, and re-created by the Holy Spirit into the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> Do you see what Bavinck did? He started with creation and ended with the consummated kingdom of God; he started in the garden and ended in glory. He was saying that this great story involves God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He showed that the original creation was very good, and the final re-creation will be very, very good—but that something, namely sin, has devastated that good creation. We can see that something had to happen in order to rescue and restore that original good creation. And that is the story of redemption—God

working through real events and real people for the salvation of his people!

Before we begin, let me offer a word of warning: Please don't think that by calling this a story that I mean it's not true. Sometimes the word *story* is used to refer to something that is made up or make-believe. Sometimes it is used to mean a lie (Did you just tell a story?). But *story* can also be used to mean an accurate account of something that happened (Have I told you the story of our crazy summer vacation?). It is in this last sense that I call the grand drama of redemption a story—not just *a* story, but *the* story, the one in which our very lives are anchored. However, don't for a minute think that you can just sit back and enjoy the show. This drama invites you in, calls you onto the stage, and transforms you into one of its innumerable participants. So, without further ado, let the lights dim and the curtain go up. Get ready for the greatest drama of all time.





## CHAPTER 1

# CLIFFSNOTES

### Scripture Memory

“No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

### Pray

---

*“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known” (Jeremiah 33:3). Father, open my heart and eyes to the wonders of your Word and the glories of your work.*

**W**hen I was growing up, family vacations were great. But the process of getting out the door to begin the vacation was not great. Usually, my brother and I were hyped up, eager to leave. My dad was focused on the goal: Get everyone in the car and get on the road. My mom was running around making sure the coffee pot was off, the windows were locked, the vacuum was put away, and the pillows were straight. Eventually the moment came when all of us were finally in the car and ready to go! Or so we thought. Inevitably, before we left the driveway, my dad would

stop and look at the map (this was long before GPS) one more time to make sure he knew exactly where we were headed.

This first chapter is somewhat like that. You are here, ready to get going. But before we “hit the road” (in chapter 2), we are going to stop and make sure we are properly oriented. We need to “look at the map” before we head out.

When you were in high school, did you use CliffsNotes (those handy little summaries of literary works written for students) to help you pass an English class? If you were like me, you used them for all the wrong reasons—mainly so you wouldn’t have to actually read the assigned book. But just because we might have used them wrongly does not mean they didn’t have a helpful purpose.

CliffsNotes are written to help provide a framework for understanding a book. CliffsNotes usually start with some fundamental elements—information about the author, the setting, the genre, major themes, and purpose of the book—and then they break down the individual chapters. That is how we are going to start this study. Chapter 1 is like reading a CliffsNotes guide for the Bible. We are going to consider the Author (and authors), the setting, the genre, the plot summaries, and the purpose of the Bible so that we have a framework to help us better understand the story the Bible tells.

## **AUTHOR(S)**

Have you ever had times when, as you read a book, you felt as though you could almost hear the author’s voice? Or maybe you’ve had that happen when you received a note from a dear friend. As you read the note, you could almost hear the writer’s voice.

When I read a book, if I don’t know the author personally, I like to know something about them. If I’m reading a book on

theology, I like to know what the author believes, or maybe a little bit about his or her life. Knowing something about an author informs how we read their work.

The same is true for the Bible. But this can be a little tricky because when we talk about the author of Scripture, we can mean the divine Author (God), or the men who captured the words on the page (Moses, David, Paul, Peter, etc.). As the living Word of God, the Bible is different from any other book we read. It's not just the work of a human being or even a group of humans. The Bible was inspired by God (meaning God himself spoke the words). We read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that "all Scripture is breathed out by God." But it was written down by numerous men over the course of more than 1,000 years. In 2 Peter 1:21, Peter wrote, "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

These men, however, were doing more than mindlessly transcribing the words of God. Part of the miracle and the mystery of the Bible is that God used ordinary men—their individual personalities, unique life experiences, and different cultures—to capture his very thoughts and words. God has always allowed his people to participate in his purposes.

As we are sitting in our imaginary driveway orienting ourselves for this journey, this is a foundational truth we must know. It will shape our understanding of exactly what we are reading, how we are to read it, and how we are to respond. As Moses said, these are not mere words for us; they are our very life (Deuteronomy 32:47). And why is that? Because they are the very words of God himself!

One of the most comforting truths about knowing that God is the divine Author of every word in Scripture is stated in Isaiah 46:9-10, where God said, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the

beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”

Only the author of a story can know where the story is headed before he starts writing. It is the will and intent of the author that carries a story forward from beginning to end. The Author of this marvelous book is on his throne on every page and in every moment of every day. God knows where the story is headed, and he will accomplish all his purposes. This is true not just of the overall story of redemption (God knew the end before he began), but it is also true of our individual lives. He is weaving together a grand story of redemption for all his children, and he is weaving together a grand story of his grace for you. God knows where your story is headed, and he intends to work all things together for your good (Romans 8:28-39) as only a divine author could.

## SETTING

I have a friend who is an archaeologist. He is like a modern-day Indiana Jones and has spent considerable time in different parts of the world digging for artifacts. If he were to find a Roman coin as he was digging, what factors would affect the conclusions he could draw about that coin?

For starters, his geographical location would matter. A Roman coin found in Egypt is going to mean something different than a Roman coin found in Texas. Also, the layer of his dig would matter. If he were to find the coin in a layer where everything around it was from the 1800s, his conclusions would be different than if he had found the coin in a layer from the first century. The geographical setting of his find will inform his understanding of it.

The historical reality also matters. If my friend were to say he had found the remains of a unicorn, what would you think? Most of us would say, “Wait a minute. A unicorn?” We would think



that he had lost his mind! Why? Because we know that unicorns are mythological, and in an archaeological dig, he should only find things that were/are real. An archaeologist can only dig up the remains of things that actually existed in a certain place at a certain time. So historical reality is also a key to his findings.

Like my friend on his digs, several things are important to us as we study to understand God and his Word. One is the historical reality of the Bible—God works in real people, in real places, in real times—real settings! As Michael Williams once stated in a class I attended, “The biblical authors...knew that faith without real world, historical fact, is not faith but mere superstition.”<sup>1</sup>

This is important to keep in mind because we need to know that God’s revelation to us is grounded in events that actually happened! We are able to be saved because a real man was really born, really died, and really rose again. Paul reminded us of this when he said, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Paul was saying that if the crucifixion and resurrection had not really happened to a real man (Jesus) at a very real moment in time (circa AD 33) in a real location (outside the city of Jerusalem), then our faith is pointless. That makes the historical setting of the Bible a big deal!

If we don’t take some time to anchor the story of “God’s works in our world” in settings of real time and real places, then we’re left with reading the Bible as a collection of moralistic stories that may or may not have happened. Or as mythology that does nothing more than display the consequences of both good and bad behavior. In such unanchored stories, God and his actions on our behalf can become like that unicorn—a fun idea, but nothing we need to take too seriously. But, praise God, the events in the Bible actually took place in locations that we can visit. This means that when we read the Bible, we are not merely reading good ideas about

how we should live, we are reading about a living God acting and working for his people. And that very same God continues to act and work for his people in our very real world today.

In the introduction, I said that the story of redemption could be summarized as God working through real events and real people for the salvation of his people. The God who created everything does not stand far off and throw moralistic ideas at us; instead, he engages with and steps into his creation—he works for us in real time and space!

As you read through Scripture, you'll see that God goes out of his way to let his readers know that what he is telling them is no mythical tale. He gives us dates, names, and facts that anchor his Word in historical settings. Think about how God had Moses begin the book of Deuteronomy:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazereth, and Dizahab. It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them, after he had defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (1:1-4).

Look at all the details that give us the historical setting. Exact locations, exact dates, and references to other historical events. This is how God makes sure we know that this story is historically grounded. Ezekiel begins with, "In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the

exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God” (verse 1). God made sure we were oriented both geographically and temporally before he gave us, through Ezekiel, the grand visions that he gave.

When you read the Bible and come to sections that give many very specific details, ask yourself why those details are included. God wants us to know that what he has recorded for us really happened. That’s why, in Luke’s Gospel, before we read about the birth of Jesus, we read, “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria” (2:1-2).

We need to know that God works through and amid human events; the miraculous occurs amid the mundane, both then and now.

## GENRE

If you have read Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, I doubt you were frustrated with him because you couldn’t find Middle-earth on Google maps. You probably even reacted in fear when Shelob (a giant spider) was about to eat Frodo (a hobbit)—even though you knew that neither of these beings actually existed. Why? Because you knew what genre you were reading. *The Lord of the Rings* is not a history book; it is a made-up story of mythical and magical characters who delight and capture our imaginations. Knowing what you are reading is an important part of knowing how to read it.

But is the Bible like *The Lord of the Rings*—a fantasy? No! We’ve already observed that what is given to us in Scripture is a record of real events, real people, and a real God speaking, acting, and moving in real time and real places.

So what genre is Scripture? That’s not an easy question to answer because the Bible contains different genres. The psalms are poetry,

the New Testament contains personal letters (epistles), and the proverbs are, well...proverbs. But does that mean the Bible is made up of a bunch of fragmented and maybe even unrelated parts? No!

The overarching genre of Scripture, the genre that holds it all together as one, coherent piece of literature, is narrative. The Bible is a story—not a fictional story, but a story nonetheless—one story, written over many centuries. Within that story we find historical records (e.g., 1 and 2 Chronicles), poetry (e.g., Psalms), historical narrative (e.g., Exodus), and several other forms of literature, but the overarching genre is narrative.

One of my favorite books, *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken, is an autobiographical narrative account of the author's marriage. Within the story, the author shares letters that he received from his dear friend, C.S. Lewis. When I get to those letters, I'm not confused even though the genre has shifted. I understand that I am to read the letters within the storyline. And the letters make greater sense within the even greater story being told.

The same is true for us as we encounter different genres within the big storyline of the Bible. They make the most sense when we read them as part of the whole. Paul's letters are not random, stand-alone documents. Rather, they are letters found within a bigger story—and they make the most sense within that story. David's psalms are not arbitrary songs. They contribute to the story being told.

God could have simply documented the facts: that he made everything good, we broke it, and now he is fixing it again. But he didn't. Like I mentioned in the introduction, God doesn't just *tell* us about himself; he *shows* us who he is through what he does in the story. Let me say that again: God doesn't just tell us about himself; he shows us who he is through what he does. He both tells us he is faithful and shows us his faithfulness through stories

about men and women he forgave, promises he fulfilled, and plans he brought to fruition.

Stories are powerful. We are all moved more by a good story than by a list of facts meant only to inform us. By using narrative, God shows us that his main goal is not to merely inform us, but to transform us and invite us into his story. We are not to know him solely in an intellectual way, but in a relational way—and, as a result, we are to love him with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. The story helps us do that.

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**You and your life  
are anything but  
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As we study this great story of redemption, my prayer is that we will see how the stories of our lives are part of God's bigger story. You and your life are anything but insignificant—you are part of something grand and glorious! As we see how the story continues from one generation to the next, from one person to the next, and from one place to the next, so will we see how it continues to include you and me today.

## **PLOT SUMMARIES**

Did your English teacher ever make you write plot summaries? Mine did, and I was horrible at this. I had such a hard time deciding which details should be included. What events in the plot were crucial? What events weren't? But, without fail, whenever I did the work of writing a summary, I ended up understanding the story better. Writing a summary meant I had to know the main plot and be able to trace how the author accomplished his or her purpose through the development of the plot. By the time I was done, I found that I was better able to explain what the book was about.

If someone were to ask you “What is the Bible about?” what would you tell them? “Jesus” is always a good answer, but what would that mean to someone who doesn’t know anything about him? Remember the man I told you about in the introduction—the one who thought *The Passion* didn’t have much of a plot? What could you tell him that would help him to see the events portrayed in the movie were part of a much bigger story? The movie portrays the high point of the story, but it is not a summary of the whole story. The movie chronicles a week in time, but that week was the culmination of thousands of years of promises and expectations.

Likewise, the ongoing effects of that one week have changed the course of history for all time—including our lives today. If we were asked to write a summary of the story, we would not begin with a baby in a manger. We would have to start in Genesis 1 because, like in most stories, the first few chapters of a book contain key information, like the setting, the characters, and even the conflict.

At the end of this chapter, I will ask you to take a minute to write down what you think might be some of the major events in the storyline of Scripture. I will ask you to do this again at the end of the book, and give you the opportunity to compare your two answers. But for now, pick a few events in the Bible and consider whether they might be crucial events in the storyline. If the story begins with God making all things good, what might be the next major event?

The Bible itself gives us multiple plot summaries that help us to see which events the Author considers key moments. And it is important to know the key moments not only so we can summarize the story of Scripture for our own comprehension and for the comprehension of others, but so we will know all that God has done, and respond faithfully.

In Joshua 24, God reminded the people, through Joshua, of

their collective story thus far. Pay attention to what God considered to be key moments as well as what he wanted their response to be:

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out.

“Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time. Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to

Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand. And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.’

“Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.”

Did you see the response God wanted from his people because of all he had done? We will be talking more about this in other chapters, but it truly does matter how we respond to God and all he has done.

One of my hopes is that, by the time you have finished this book, you will be better able to summarize and articulate what this story is about. As we better understand what the key events in the storyline are, we, like Moses, Joshua, and Luke, will be better able to not only respond faithfully, but also be able to tell others about our God and his glorious plan of salvation.

## **AUTHOR’S PURPOSE**

When my husband Craig and I started dating, he lived in Colorado, and I was in Oklahoma. This was before cell phones, and our phone bills were sky-high! But we were in love, and what is



money when you are in love? We would talk for hours, just getting to know each other. Craig loves to tell the story about being on the phone with me one night while he was standing in the hallway, and his friends passed him to go out for the evening. They teased him about not going with them. He just smiled and stayed on the phone. But when they came back to the fraternity house many hours later and we were *still* on the phone, they about fell over laughing at him! He has not heard the end of that one.

During this time, I would write long letters telling Craig about me, my days, my life. We were getting to know each other. But I had to decide what to tell him and what not to tell him. If I had kept something hidden, Craig would not have known about it. He could know me only to the extent that I was willing to reveal myself to him. But we were so eager to know each other, we readily shared a lot about ourselves—our hopes, dreams, fears, thoughts, aspirations—anything that would help the other to know us better. We wanted to know and be known.

The Bible is how God has chosen to reveal himself to us. The only reason we know anything about God is because he wants us to know him. We do not discover God; God reveals himself to us. He has chosen to make himself known to us! Has he told us everything there is to know about him? Absolutely not! But as Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:3, “His divine power has granted to us *all things* that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (emphasis added). God has told us everything that we need to know; he has told us both who he is and what he has done. But not all revelation is the same.

Scripture tells us that the heavens and earth reveal God’s existence, power, and glory. Psalm 19:1 states, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” Psalm 50:6 says, “The heavens declare his righteousness,” and Romans

1:19-20 tells us, “What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” This is called God’s general revelation. He reveals himself in a general way to everyone who has ever lived.

But is that all the revelation we need? Does God’s general revelation provide enough information for us to know “all things that pertain to life and godliness”? No. Although there are people who seem to think so. They say that they don’t need church or the Bible; they can simply “worship God in nature.” One of the reasons God’s general revelation of himself is not enough for us is because we don’t understand or accurately interpret this revelation. As Michael Williams has said, “Sin has chewed the wires to the radio. God is still broadcasting, but we don’t hear clearly.”<sup>2</sup> We need help to understand what God has revealed!

Thankfully, God has not only revealed himself generally, but he has also revealed himself specifically. The Bible is part of God’s specific revelation to us. And part of what God does as he reveals himself to us in Scripture is explain what we see but don’t understand. That is why merely observing nature is not enough. We need the Author of all creation to comment on his work. There is a reason that the word *author* is the root of *authority*—the one who originated the idea has the most authority to explain the idea. We need God to explain his revelation to us. But there is even more we need.

In John 17:3, Jesus said, “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Knowing things about God is wonderful, but salvation is found not in knowing about him, but in knowing him personally through

his ultimate revelation—his Son, Jesus. God has revealed himself fully in his Son, Jesus. Jesus himself said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), and we are told in Colossians 1:15 that “He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God.”

God has chosen to reveal himself to us so that we will know him. But knowledge of him is not the end goal. The reason God has revealed himself is for our salvation and his worship. General revelation reveals that God exists, and specific revelation reveals how we can be saved. We must respond to what God

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God has recorded this great story of all he has done not simply so that we will know about him, but so that we will know him, believe him, be saved by him, and worship him forever.

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has told us about himself. He has recorded this great story of all he has done not simply so that we will know about him, but so that we will know him, believe him, be saved by him, and worship him forever.

## Points to Remember from Chapter 1

- God is the ultimate Author of Scripture—the one who knows the end from the beginning.
- The events of Scripture are anchored in history—real time, real places, real people.
- The Bible is a narrative account of God and his work in our world, in which he tells us and shows us who he is.
- The story is still unfolding, which means we get to be a part of it!







## **For Further Study**

1. Read Acts 9:1-9. Why is the historical setting (reality) of this scene important? What is miraculous, and what is mundane?
2. Read the summaries in Nehemiah 9:6-37 and Psalm 105. What events are recorded in both passages, and what are mentioned only in Nehemiah? What are some possible reasons for that?
3. Read Revelation 22:18-19. What does this tell us about the revelation of God through his written Word?

