

God's Redemption Story

radical grace for you and me

God's Redemption Story

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Isaiah 44:22

“I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”

How to use this study

Think of this study as a guide, helping you dig deep into what the Bible reveals about you and our God. It's designed to be used by a group, whether that's just you and a friend on your lunch break, a men's breakfast group, or your Sunday school class.

There is no homework, so your group doesn't need to prepare in advance. Part of the beauty of this study is that you and your group can study at the same time. As you discuss insights from the text, you'll find exciting, life-impacting truths about God and His will for our lives—and you'll experience this together!

Your group should have a leader to guide and keep the discussion moving. If you're the leader, don't worry we've got some helpful tips to make your job easier. Everything you need for a great group study is in this book.

How to lead this study

- Before you meet, go over the lesson and mark the text. This will help you feel familiar with the text, so you can lead a smooth discussion. As the leader, you may want to use specific colors for your key words so that you can easily find references during the lesson.
- When it's time to start, simply read the lesson aloud section by section. (Don't skip the Insight boxes!) Work through the lesson as

a group, observing and discussing what you learn as you go. When you're reading the Scripture verses, you can have the group say aloud the words they are marking in the text.

- Discussion questions are there to help you cover the material, but sometimes your group will naturally cover the subject on their own. These questions are just a guide, so feel free to use them or skip them depending on how the discussion is moving.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week's lesson. Try to make sure everyone has plenty of opportunities to contribute to each discussion, and don't be afraid to let silence linger for a few beats before you move on.
- Keep the discussion moving. If your group has exhausted a topic, feel free to move ahead quickly. If a topic is really engaging, you may want to extend the lesson into the next meeting. Just remember— it's much better to leave everyone wanting more than to go too long and have the group lose interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of someone's answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth found in God's Word. Your goal as a group is to learn what the Bible says, not to debate human philosophy. Simply stick with Scripture and give God the opportunity to speak. His Word is truth (John 17:17)!

God's Redemption Story

Have you ever picked up a book, opened to the middle chapters and started to read? Or, have you flipped to the very last page and read the ending before even knowing who the characters were? Though it can be confusing to read a story this way, we often treat the Bible in a similar manner, skipping around and understanding fragments and pieces of God's Word but not fully connecting each part to the whole. Though the Bible contains 66 books divided into the Old and New Testaments, every word is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16) and tells one cohesive story.

In the Bible, we learn the answers to some of life's biggest questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? Why are we here? However, when we take a step back to understand God's grand narrative of Scripture, we see that the central character in the story isn't us, but God.

The story of the Bible can be divided into four major parts—creation, fall, redemption (buying back), and restoration. You may thoroughly understand one aspect of the story but haven't seen it in connection with the others. Or you may find yourself caught up in a false story, one that contradicts God's Word. The world is full of narratives that contain contradictory beliefs on where we came from, what is wrong with the world, how this problem can be fixed, and where we will ultimately find true restoration.

How would you answer these questions? Do you see a problem in yourself or in the world? If so, where are you looking for redemption and restoration?

In this study we'll examine God's full story of redemption from beginning to end. May God open our eyes that we may behold wonderful things from His word (Psalm 119:18) and in turn worship Him as the One who is making all things new (Revelation 21:5).

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Week One

How God Made Us

Have you ever wondered where you came from? Why you exist? Where it all started? To begin our look into the whole redemption story, we must start at the very beginning—creation.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6-9; and Acts 17:24-28a.

- mark every reference to *God* and *LORD* with a triangle, including pronouns
- mark *earth* and *world* with a circle

As you read texts, have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure to mark every occurrence of the words. Do this throughout the study.

DISCUSS

What did God do according to Genesis 1:1?

Look at where you marked God in Psalm 33. How did God create?

Now look at where you marked *earth*, *world*. What did the psalmist call the earth and its inhabitants to do?

Discuss what Acts 17:24-28a says about God.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 33:6-9

6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

9 For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.

Acts 17:24-28a

24 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

26 and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

28a for in Him we live and move and exist, ...

According to Acts 17:26-28, what was God's purpose in creating man and determining his boundaries?

Spend some time discussing how you can apply what you learned about God from these passages. For example, when did you first recognize the world around you as God's creation? What prompted you—the ocean, mountains? When have you stood in awe of Him?

OBSERVE

God is powerful—He brought everything into existence simply by His words. Though we didn't look at all of Genesis 1, it is the account of God's creation of the heavens and the earth. He spoke and it was so. He formed the sky, sea, and land, and He filled them with the vegetation, stars, birds, sea creatures, animals, and humans that He created.

In Genesis 1 we see the origin of everything, and all things are described as "good" seven times.

Let's take a closer look at the creation of man and woman to learn about mankind and his relationship to God.

Leader: Read aloud Genesis 1:26-28.

- mark *God* with a triangle
- underline *man*, *him*, and *them*

DISCUSS

Look at each place you marked *God* and *man*. What do you learn about them and their relationship to one another?

What is man's identity and purpose?

Genesis 1:26-28

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Who gave man (male and female) this purpose? What does this tell you about the relationship between God and man?

INSIGHT BOX

Notice the “us” and “our” in the text. This implies that God is more than one person, and that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all involved in creation.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud Genesis 2:7-9, 15-18 and 21-25.

- mark the *LORD God* with a triangle
- double underline *woman* and *wife*

DISCUSS

What do you learn about *God* and *man*?

According to verse 9, what did God put in the garden? What specific trees are mentioned?

Look at verses 16 and 17. Did God permit man to eat from all the trees? Explain your answer.

What did God say the consequence for disobedience would be?

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-18, 21-25

7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

OBSERVE

Though God gave a full account of creation in Genesis 1, He took special time in Genesis 2 to tell us more about the creation of man and woman. But let's look first at their relationship to the rest of creation.

Leader: Read Psalm 8:3-9 aloud.

- mark *God*, *You*, and *Your* with a triangle
- underline *man* and pronouns referring to him

DISCUSS

What do verses 3-5 say about God?

What do verses 6-9 teach you about the role of man with respect to the rest of God's creation?

How does the psalmist describe God's name?

What does God's name "LORD" mean for you?

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-18, 21-25 (continued)

23 The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Psalm 8:3-9

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,

The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

4 What is man that You take thought of him,

And the son of man that You care for him?

5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God,

And You crown him with glory and majesty!

6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;

You have put all things under his feet,

7 All sheep and oxen,

And also the beasts of the field,

8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,

Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD, our Lord,

How majestic is Your name in all the earth!

OBSERVE

Although His majestic name and glory are above the heavens (Psalm 8:1), God gave man a special place in creation. And so, David asks, “What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?” (Psalm 8:4). Let’s take a closer look at God’s purpose for creation. We know where we came from, but why was everything created?

Leader: Read aloud Revelation 4:11 and Colossians 1:13-17.

- mark *God* with a triangle
- mark *Son* and all pronouns referring to Him with a cross
- circle *all things*

INSIGHT BOX

Redemption is buying something back, making a payment to release something. In Jesus, God made payment to release His children from sin.

DISCUSS

What do you learn about God in Revelation 4:11?

What do these passages say about “all things”?

What purpose does this give to your life?

Revelation 4:11

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

Colossians 1:13-17

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.
17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

According to the verses from Colossians, what has God done for believers and through whom?

Who were all things created *by, through, and for*? What purpose do each of these prepositions add to your life?

How can you apply these truths to your life right now? Are you worshipping God as your Creator and Redeemer?

Wrap it up

In the beginning, God created; He spoke the heavens, the earth, and everything in them into existence. He formed man and woman as the pinnacle of all He made and He Himself breathed “the breath of life” into them. Think of this intimate relationship of man and woman to God their Creator from the very beginning!

God made man in the image of Himself, distinct from the rest of creation. He graciously gave the two a place to live and several purposes.

They were to become one flesh, joined together in marriage. What a beautiful design—whole relationships with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation. The Lord commanded the pair to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it and rule together. In addition, He gave them the tree of life in the garden to eat from. Imagine living forever with God ruling a creation He declared “very good”!

You may be wondering, “If creation was so good, why is there so much corruption and evil intentions today?” We will look at this next week, but we know from the rest of Scripture that our Creator has determined through His Son Jesus to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Everything—from the dry land, to the whales, to flowers, to butterflies, to you—was created *for* Jesus, for His honor, fame, and glory.

As you close your time in study this week, ponder your Creator and your purpose. Do you know Him personally through faith in Jesus? Do you *trust* His purpose for you? Are you living for Him, or are you worshiping some aspect of His creation? What difference should the truth that God is your Creator and Redeemer make to your worship?