

From Garden to Glory

A Bible Study on the Bible's Story

Courtney Doctor

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Why This Study?

How To Use This Study

Introduction

Chapter 1: Cliff's Notes	17
Day 1: Author(s)	
Day 2: Setting	
Day 3: Genre	
Day 4: Plot Summaries	
Day 5: Author's Purpose	
Chapter 2: Once Upon a Time	35
Day 1: The Kingdom	
Day 2: The King	
Day 3: The Love of a Good Father	
Day 4: The Mission of God	
Day 5: Image Bearing	
Chapter 3: But Then an Evil Serpent...	53
Day 1: The Intruder	
Day 2: The Sin	
Day 3: The Shame	
Day 4: The Sentence	
Day 5: The Mercy	
Chapter 4: The Heart of Our King	71
Day 1: The Heart of the King—Love	
Day 2: The Way of the King—Covenant	
Day 3: Tracing the Covenants—Noah	
Day 4: Tracing the Covenants—Abram	
Day 5: Tracing the Covenants—Abraham	
Chapter 5: A Kingdom of Priests	87
Day 1: The Pattern of Redemption	
Day 2: Treasured Possession	
Day 3: Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation	
Day 4: Real Relationship	
Day 5: The Law	

Chapter 6: A Dwelling Place for the King	103
Day 1: I Will Dwell Among Them	
Day 2: Tabernacle	
Day 3: Throne	
Day 4: Temple	
Day 5: Exile and Return	
Chapter 7: The Hero Arrives	121
Day 1: The Second Adam	
Day 2: The Reconciler	
Day 3: The Redeemer	
Day 4: The Perfect Sacrifice	
Day 5: The Conqueror	
Chapter 8: The 50 Most Important Days in the History of the World	137
Day 1: Crucifixion	
Day 2: Resurrection	
Day 3: Ascension	
Day 4: Session	
Day 5: Pentecost	
Chapter 9: Waiting for Our King to Return	155
Day 1: Image Bearing	
Day 2: Be Fruitful and Multiply	
Day 3: Dominion and Righteous Rule	
Day 4: Go and Be a Blessing	
Day 5: Holiness Matters	
Chapter 10: Happily Ever After	173
Day 1: All Things New	
Day 2: The Tree of Life	
Day 3: The Throne of God	
Day 4: The Dwelling of God	
Day 5: Putting It All Together	
Endnotes	193
Bibliography	197

From Garden to Glory

A Bible Study on the Bible's Story

Courtney Doctor

© 2016 - Committee on Discipleship Ministries
1700 North Brown Road, Suite 102
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30043
Bookstore: 1-800-283-1357
678-825-1100
www.pcacdm.org/bookstore

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronically, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise – excerpted as expressly allowed herein or for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, without the prior permission of the publisher, Committee on Discipleship Ministries, at the above address.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version(TM) Copyright(C) 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, A Division of Good News Publishers, 1300 Crescent Street, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, USA. All Rights Reserved.

This edition published by arrangement with Crossway Bibles, a Division of Good News Publishers.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version(TM) is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. All Rights Reserved.

Cover photo: Ruth Doctor

Database(C) 2001 iExalt, Inc.

ISBN: 978-1-944964-01-6

Introduction

If you saw *The Passion of the Christ*, you know that it evoked strong emotions. This movie told the story of Jesus' last 24 hours before the crucifixion. 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 as we let it 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 already knowing much of the backstory. You knew the movie was picking up a story line mid-way. But for this young man, it was like going to see *Tangled* (Disney's version of the Rapunzel story) and only seeing the part where Rapunzel is rescued from the tower. If he 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, his 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 our young movie-goer, wonder what difference the horrible and gruesome death of a man on a cross 2,000 years ago could possibly make to you. Well, if that is the case, have I got a story for you!

But if you did grow up hearing the backstory, before you either chuckle or roll your eyes at this young man, we need to stop and think 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 me of my sins and take me to live with him in heaven for all eternity." And that is true. But that is not 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 ends.

Herman Bavinck, a Dutch theologian in the 1800's, sums 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." Do you see what Bavinck did? He started with creation and ended with the consummated kingdom of God; he starts in the Garden and ends in glory. He shows that this great story involves God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He shows 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 see that something had to happen in order to rescue and restore that original good creation. And that is the story of redemption! As John Calvin said, this is the story of "God's works in our world on our behalf."

Before we begin, let me offer a word of warning. Please don't think that by calling this a story I mean it is not true. Sometimes we use the word "story" to refer to something that is made up or make-believe. Sometimes we use it to mean a lie (did you just tell a story?). But we also use it to mean the accurate account of something that has 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. But don't for a minute think that you get to just sit back and enjoy the show. This drama will invite you in, call you onto the stage, and transform 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.

1

Cliff's Notes

When I was a little girl, family vacations were great. But the process of actually getting out the door to begin the family 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. But the moment always came when we were finally all in the car and my dad was backing out of the garage. We were 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.

Chapter 1 of this study is somewhat like that. Here we are, gathered, ready to finally get going—but we are going to stop before we actually “hit the road” (in Chapter 2) and make sure we are properly oriented. We need to “look at the map” before we head out.

How many of you used *Cliff's Notes* (those handy little summaries of literary works written for students) in high school in order to pass an English class (don't worry, I'm not going to tell your English teacher)? If you are 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 can't have a helpful purpose. *Cliff's Notes* are written in an attempt to help provide a framework for understanding. *Cliff's Notes* usually start with some of the fundamental elements of a story—information about the author, the setting, the genre, major themes, and purpose of the book—and then break down the individual chapters. That is how we are going to start this study. Chapter 1 is like reading *Cliff's Notes* for the Bible (but without the guilt!). Think of Chapter 1 as an overview of the Bible as preparation to actually study the Bible. We are going to look at the Author (and authors), the setting, the genre, the plot summaries, and the purpose of the Bible, so that we will have a framework to help us better understand the story. Like I said in the introduction, the Bible is a story; it is the story of how God, through his words and his actions, has revealed himself to us. So let's take some time to think through some of the fundamental elements of that story: who wrote it, what kind of story it is, where it takes place, and why it was written.

Pray

“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known” (Jer. 33:3). Let's call to God and ask him to open our hearts and eyes to the wonders of his Word and the glories of his work.

Day 1: Author(s)

I was reading a plot summary for *The Fault in Our Stars*. One of the twists in the plot develops when the main character, Hazel, discovers the author of her favorite novel actually had an experience similar to the one he had written about. Knowing something about the author changed the way Hazel read his book. Has that ever happened to you? Maybe you know the author of a book, or have received a note from a dear friend, and, as you have read the book or the note, you can almost “hear” the writer’s voice as you read. Even if I don’t know an author personally, I like to know something about him or her. If I am reading a book on theology, I like to know about the author—what he or she believes, or maybe a little bit about his or her life. Knowing something about the author informs how we read their book.

Part of the miracle and the mystery of the Bible is that God used ordinary men—their individual personalities, their unique life experiences, and their different cultures—to capture the very thoughts and words of God himself. He allows his people to participate in his purposes.

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 Author (God) or the men who actually 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 is not just the work of a human being or even a group of humans. The Bible is inspired by God (meaning God himself is speaking the words) and written down by numerous men over more than one thousand years. These men, however, were more than just transcribing the words of God. Part of the miracle and the mystery of the Bible is that God used ordinary men—their individual personalities, their unique life experiences, and their different cultures—to capture the very thoughts and words of God himself. He allows his people to participate in his purposes.

As we are sitting in our “driveway” orienting ourselves before we “hit the road” of our study, this is a foundational truth we need to know. This is a truth that will shape our understanding of exactly what we are reading as well as how we are to respond. As Moses said, these

are no mere words for us, they are our very life (Deut. 32:47). And why is that? Because they are the very words of God himself!

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:16. Who is the ultimate author of all of Scripture?

- What is the name of the man who penned this verse?

2. Read 2 Peter 1:21. How did God “breathe out” all Scripture? What are some other possible ways of saying (explaining) that?

- What is the name of the man who penned this verse?

3. Read Acts 4:24-25. Whose “mouth” was used? Who was the one using the “mouth?”

- What is the name of the man who penned this verse?

4. Read Isaiah 46:9-10. What does God declare from the beginning, according to v. 10? What will he accomplish?

Only the Author of a story knows where the story is headed before he starts writing! It is the will and the intent of the author that carries a story from beginning to end. 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. God knows what he is doing before he ever begins.

*Only the Author
of a story knows
where the story is
headed before he
starts writing!*

5. In what ways does the thought that God, the Author of your story, knows the end before he ever begins, change the way you view your current circumstances, challenges, suffering, and trials?

- Read Romans 8:28-39. What hope or confidence does this give you?

The temptation to which we are all vulnerable is to read the Bible as if it were all about us. Most of us have been taught to read the Bible as if its main reason for existence is to give us a little encouragement for the day. We look for verses that give us a little “pick-me-up.” But is that why the Author has written this book? We will talk more about this on Day 5, but the reason the Author has written this book is to both reveal who he is and teach us who we are. One of the first things we learn is that he is sovereign over all things and he, the Author, knows what he is doing. He knows where the story is headed and he will accomplish all of his purposes—which is the ultimate encouragement we all need.

Take-Away

God is the ultimate Author of the entire story—he is the One who knows the end from the beginning.

For Further Study

1. Of what else is God the author?

- Acts 3:15

- Hebrews 12:2 (“founder” can also be translated “author”)

- Genesis 2:3 (what did God “do”)

2. Write a sentence or two explaining why it matters that God is the author of each of these:

- Scripture:

- Life:

- Faith:

- Creation:

Scripture Memory

For 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

DAY 2: 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 that coin in a dig where everything around it was from the 1800's, his conclusions would be different than finding that coin in a layer from the first century. His geographical setting informs his understanding of what he finds.

If my friend said he had found the remains of a unicorn, what would you think? For most of us, we would think, "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 be finding things that are real. An archaeologist can only dig up the remains of something 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 of those things is the historical reality of the Bible—God works in real people, in real places, in real times—real settings! As Mike Williams puts it, "The biblical authors . . . knew that faith without real world, historical fact, is not faith but mere superstition."¹ This is important to keep in mind because we need to know that God's revelation to us is grounded in events that really happened! We are saved because a real man was really born, really died, and really rose again. Paul reminds us of this when he says "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:14). What Paul is saying is if the crucifixion and resurrection did not really happen to a real man (Jesus) at a very real moment in time (circa 33 AD), in a real location (outside the city of Jerusalem), then our faith is pointless. That makes the historical setting of the Bible a pretty big deal!

*God works in real
people, in real places,
in real times—
real settings!*

If we don't take some time to anchor the story of "God's works in our world" in settings of real time and place, then we can read the Bible as a group of moralistic stories that may or may not have actually happened. Or we can read them as mythology that displays nothing more than 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 really fun idea, but nothing we need to take too seriously. But, praise God, the events in the Bible are actual events that took place in locations that we can even visit. This means, when we read the Bible, we are not merely reading good ideas on how we should live, but we are reading about a living God acting and working for his people. And that very same God is acting and working for his people in our very real world today.

In the introduction I shared a quote from John Calvin that said the Bible is about "God's works in our world on our behalf." The God who created it all does not stand far off and throw moralistic ideas at us but, instead, engages and steps into his creation—God working for us in real time and space!

1. Read Genesis 1:1. List a few things that you learn about God, time, and the world.

2. **Read Deuteronomy 1:1-5. In your own words, discuss why you think the chapter doesn't just begin in verse 6 (what is the point of all of those names)?**

3. Read Ezekiel 1:1. Again, what is the point of the details? List 4-5 things you learn about the setting (time and place).

Over and over again God goes out of his way to let his readers know that what he is about to tell them really happened—this is no mythological tale! God works in the midst of human events; the miraculous occurs in the midst of the mundane.

4. Read Luke 2:1-5. Again, list 4-5 things you learn about the setting (time and place). How is this an example of the miraculous occurring in the midst of the mundane?

5. **Think about the very real circumstances in your life today—the joys and the struggles. We have been talking about how God works in real people, in real time, and in real places—today just like in 33 AD. How is God working in the mundane and difficult places in your life?**

Take-Away

The events of Scripture are anchored in history—real time, real places, real people.

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. What are some of the different ways people might think about the historical reality of Jesus? In your own words, why does it matter what we believe about this?

Scripture Memory:

For 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

DAY 3: Genre

If you have read Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, I doubt that you were frustrated with him for the fact that you couldn't find Middle-Earth on Google-maps. You probably even reacted in fear when She-lob (a giant spider) was about to eat Bilbo (a hobbit)—even though you knew that neither of these things actually exists. Why? Because you know what genre it is. It is not a history book; it is a made-up story of mythical and magical characters that delight and capture our imaginations. Knowing what you are reading is an important piece in knowing how to read it.

But is the Bible like *The Lord of the Rings*—a fantasy? No! In yesterday's homework, you looked at the fact that what is given to us in Scripture is the recording of real events, the stories of real people, as well as the recording of a real God speaking, acting, and moving in real time and place.

So what genre is Scripture? That is not a simple and easy question to answer because the Bible contains different forms of literature. The psalms are poetry, the New Testament contains personal letters, and the proverbs are,

***Knowing what you
are reading is an
important piece
in knowing how
to read it.***

well... proverbs. But does that mean that the Bible is a bunch of fragmented, maybe even unrelated, parts? No! What is the overarching genre of Scripture, the genre that holds it all together as one, coherent piece of literature? The Bible is narrative, a story—not a fictional story, but a story nonetheless. It is one story, written over centuries. The Bible is a narrative account of “God’s works in our world on our behalf.” 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. I am not confused when I come to the letters, even though the genre has shifted. I understand that I am to read them within the story line. 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 story line 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 make the most sense within that story. David’s psalms are not arbitrary songs. They are songs that reflect the emotions and circumstances of the story being told.

1. Turn to the Table of Contents in your Bible and list 3-5 different books and what genre you think each might be.

God could have just documented the facts: that he made everything good, we broke it, and now he is fixing it again. But he doesn’t. God doesn’t just tell us about himself; he shows us who he is through what he

By using narrative, God is showing us that his main goal is not to merely inform us, but he is actually transforming us and inviting us into this story.

does. 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, 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 is showing us that his main goal is not to merely inform us, but he is actually transforming us and inviting us into this story. We are not to know him in only an intellectual way, but we are to know him in a relational way—and we are to love him with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength.

2. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7. How does God use a story to both reveal truth as well as invite a response in David’s life?

Let’s look at a few of the places where we can thread pieces of the story together. If the Bible really is one, big, continuous story, then we should be able to find places where the story is woven together.

3. Genesis 50:24-26. What does Joseph ask?

- Read Exodus 13:19. What does Moses do?

- Read Joshua 24:32. What finally happens?

There is more to this story of Joseph and his bones—hang in there and we will get to it in a few weeks. But for now, it is important just to see that a piece of the story that began in Genesis is still a piece of the story over 400 years later in the book of Joshua. In the same way, we can see bits of this continuity as the story progresses in the New Testament, too.

4. Read Luke 1:1-4. Who wrote it? To whom was it written? For what purpose did he write it?

- Read Acts 1:1-3. Describe what you notice about the continuity of the story.

But it is not just in the smaller pieces of the story that we see continuity. This story holds together from beginning to end—from the garden to glory!

5. Read Genesis 2:7-14 and Revelation 22:1-5. List 2-3 things that you notice are present in both accounts. How does this inform you about the continuity of the story?

I will say it again—the overarching genre of Scripture is narrative, a story. Understanding this helps shape us (because we are studying this not just to be informed but to be transformed). For instance, have you ever felt insignificant? We all, at times, question the meaning and significance of our lives. My prayer is, as we study this great story of redemption, we will see how our stories are part of that bigger story and that we will more and more understand we have been created for a glorious purpose—our lives are anything but insignificant. You are a part of something grand and glorious! As we look at how the story continues from one generation to the next, from one person to the next, and from one place to the next, so it still continues to include you and me today.

6. List a few ways people reach for significance in their lives.

- Describe the difference between significance found in those things and the significance that comes because your life is anchored in this greater story.

Take-Away

The Bible is predominantly a story that both tells us and shows us about God and his relationship with his creation. God is revealing both who he is and who we are through the biblical story.

For Further Study

1. Look back at Days 1-3. Summarize how you would put all three of these things together (author, setting, genre) and explain their importance.

Scripture Memory

For 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

DAY 4: Plot Summaries

Did your English teacher ever make you write plot summaries? Mine did and I was not good at writing them. They were difficult. It was so hard for me to decide which details should be included. What events in the plot were crucial? What events weren't? But, without fail, whenever I did work to write 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. In the end, after I had worked to write a summary, I found I was also better able to explain what the book was actually 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 didn't think *The Passion* had much of a plot? What could you tell him that would help him see the events portrayed in the movie are actually 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 on-going 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 begin at creation and move through the major events of the Old Testament.

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 begin at creation and move through the major events of the Old Testament.

Usually the first chapter or two of a book contains some pretty key information and events. Let's take a peek at the first few chapters of our story and write down any information that might prove to be important.

1. Look up the following verses and write down any pieces that might be important to include in our summary:
 - Genesis 1:1
 - Genesis 1:26 (two key points!)
 - Genesis 1:31

- Genesis 3:1-7

- Genesis 3:15

If we were writing a summary, knowing what comes next in our storyline would be important, so we are going to honor our English teachers out there! Take a minute and write down what you think might be a few of the major events in the story. Don't worry if you feel like you don't even know where to start—just take a shot at it. At the end of this study, we will try to do this again and you will be able to compare your two answers. But for now, pick a few events in the Bible that you might know about and think about whether or not they might be crucial events in the story line. We just looked at how the story begins, so what might be the next major event? Try to write down three events from the Old Testament and three events from the New Testament that you think might be important to include if you were to write a summary of the story found in the Bible (and there are no right or wrong answers here):

The Bible actually records a few summaries of itself!

2. Read Deuteronomy 6:20-25. Using the chart below, list 3-5 things that Moses includes in this summary.
3. Read Joshua 24:1-13. List 3-5 events that Joshua includes in his summary. Circle or highlight any events that are included in both.
4. Skim Acts 7:2-50. Identify 3-5 events that Luke includes in his summary. Circle or highlight any events that are included in all three summaries.

Deuteronomy 6:20-25	Joshua 24:1-13	Acts 7:2-50

One of my hopes for this study is that, by the time we have finished it, we will all be better able to summarize and articulate what this story is about and better understand what the key events in the storyline are, so that, we, like Moses, Joshua, and Luke, will be better able to tell others about our God and his plan of salvation. So press on; we will be spending time studying just that.

Take-Away

There are key moments of the story that are crucial for us to know.

For Further Study

1. Read the summaries in Nehemiah 9:6-37 and Psalm 105. What events are recorded in both and what events are only mentioned in Nehemiah?

2. What are some possible reasons for that?

Scripture Memory

For 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

DAY 5: Author's Purpose

Every author has a purpose. Some write to inform, others to entertain, still others to persuade. What was God's purpose?

When Craig and I started dating, he lived in Colorado and I lived 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 (the phone was in the hallway of his fraternity house) as 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

We do not discover God; God reveals himself to us.

later and we were still on the phone, they about fell over laughing at him! He has never heard the end of that one.

I would write long letters just telling him about me, my day, my life. How else would he get to know me? But I had to decide what to tell to him. If I had kept something hidden, Craig would not have known it. He could only know me to the extent that I was willing to reveal myself to him. But we were so eager to know each other, we readily told the other one about ourselves—our hopes, dreams, fears, thoughts, aspirations—anything that would help us know the other one better. We wanted to know and be known.

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 makes 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 mine). So God has told us (in both word and deed) 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. Let’s look at several different ways that God has made himself known and the results of that knowledge.

1. Read Psalm 19:1. What is revealing what?

- _____ declares (or reveals) _____

- _____ proclaims (or reveals) _____

- To whom is it being revealed?

- Restate that in your own words.

2. Read Psalm 50:6. What is revealing what?

- _____ declare (or reveal) _____

- To whom is it being revealed?

3. Read Romans 1:18-20.

- What is being revealed?

- Why (v. 19)?

- In what is it revealed (v. 20)?

- Where does that leave man (v. 20)?

4. **Make a list of 3-5 things that, according to the verses above, are known about God through his creation.**

5. **Is that enough information? Is that “all things that pertain to life and godliness?” List a couple of things that are missing.**

Why is God's creation (the heavens and the earth) not enough information? We all know people who think it is—people who say that they don't need church or the Bible, they can simply “worship God in nature.” One of the reasons God's revelation of himself in nature is not enough for us is because “Sin has chewed the wires to the radio. God is still broadcasting, but we don't hear clearly.”² We need help to understand what we are seeing! Part of what God does as he reveals himself to us in the Bible is explain the things we see but don't understand. That is why just 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.³ We need God to explain his revelation to us. But we need even more still.

6. Read Exodus 34:5-7. List several things God reveals about himself in these verses.

- Do you think that in these verses God is revealing himself more as the Creator or as a Father? Comment on how this revelation is different than the revelation of God in creation.

- What are some possible responses to this knowledge of God (see v. 8)?

This is wonderful knowledge of God to have. But it is still not enough; we need even more.

7. Read John 17:3. What knowledge is needed for eternal life?

8. Read 1 John 5:11-12. Where is eternal life found?

Knowing things about God is wonderful, but salvation is found, not in knowing about him, but in knowing him. God has revealed himself fully in his son, Jesus (John 14:9; Colossians 1:15).

The reason God has revealed himself is for our salvation and his worship.

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. We are required to respond to what he has told us about himself. God has recorded this great story of his “works in our world on our behalf” not so we will merely know about him, but so that we will know him, believe him, be saved, and worship him forever.

Take-Away

Because God wants us to know him, he has revealed himself to us.

For Further Study

1. Read Revelation 22:18-19. What does this tell us about the revelation of God through his written word?

2. Read Philippians 2:9-11. What will the final response of every person be?

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for revealing himself and asking him to help you better understand his revelation. Consider responding in a Philippians 2:10 kind of way.

Scripture Memory

For 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

Points to Remember from Chapter 1

- God is the ultimate Author of Scripture.
- The historical reality of the events of Scripture is vital to our understanding of God and his word. God has moved in real time, real space, and real people—and still does!
- The Bible is a narrative account of God and his work in our world. He both tells us and shows us who he is through this story of “his works in our world on our behalf.”
- The story is still unfolding, which means that we get to be a part of it!
- God, the Author of our story, has chosen to reveal himself because he wants us to know him!
- God reveals himself through his creation but even more fully through his Word—both the written Word and the Word who took on flesh and dwelt among us.