



# THE STORY



## Welcome and Prayer

*Have someone open the group with prayer, and pray that God would lead your time and speak to you through one another.*

## Opening Question

*The goal of our groups is to study the Bible while making meaningful personal relationships. As we learn more about each other, we build trust and can strengthen each other through the discussion.*

*"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17*

**What was one of your favourite days in the last month, and why?**

## Watch the video - "Session 1: Creation" (14 minutes)

[Session 1. Creation: The Beginning of Life as We Know It](#)

## Discuss

1. Why is it significant that God created people in his own image?
2. What does this say about the importance of people in God's eyes, and how people should treat other people?
3. Where was Adam when Eve was being tempted to disobey God? What does this teach us about our responsibility to others around us?
4. The serpent asks Eve "Did God REALLY say...?" What are some lies you see that try to make you question God's good design?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What is one of your favourite activities to do on a day off?**

## Watch the video - "Session 2: God Builds a Nation" (11 minutes)

[Session 2. God Builds a Nation](#)

## Discuss

1. God chose Abraham and his descendants to represent Him to others who did not yet know God. What parallels can you draw between Israel and the Church?
2. Consider God's interaction with each person in chapter 2 of The Story. What patterns can you identify? What do these patterns reveal about the character of God?
3. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for God to fulfill His promise of a child. Have you waited for a long period of time for God to act in a given situation? Are you waiting on something now? (Share the circumstance only if you are comfortable.) How might this example serve to encourage you?
4. Jacob said to Esau, "For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably" (p. 24). By showing grace to Jacob, Esau demonstrated God's gracious character. Who do you need to show grace to?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What is the most memorable gift you have ever received?**

## Watch the video - "Session 3: Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh" (11 minutes)

[Session 3. Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh](#)

## Discuss

1. Even though Joseph experienced betrayal, he went on to enjoy a full and purposeful life in Egypt. What factors or spiritual understandings do you think made this possible? How was it possible for Joseph to forgive his brothers?
2. What are the benefits experienced by Joseph's employers, Potiphar and the prison warden (p. 31-32)? How would your workplace benefit if you allowed God to work through you there?
3. List the injustices Joseph suffered. What sustained him? Recall a time in your own life that you suffered unjustly for doing the right thing. What sustained you?
4. Ponder the whole life story of Joseph. As a group, list the ways God's sovereignty came to light. How does God's sovereignty impact your personal faith in Him?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What was the best concert you have been to, and why?**

## Watch the video - "Session 4: Deliverance" (11 minutes)

[Session 4. Deliverance](#)

## Discuss

1. How did Moses' life experiences prepare him for God's call? What life experience could God use to minister to others through you?
2. Look at God's description of Himself on page 48 (note the "I will" phrases). What is Moses focused on? What is God focused on?
3. The Feast of Passover (p. 51-52) was to be a perpetual reminder of how God delivered Israel. What are the parallels between Communion today and the Passover?
4. God provides food and water for the Israelites while they are wandering in the desert. Describe a time God met your need (emotionally, physically, spiritually, financially, etc.) in an unexpected way. Share how this impacted you and others.
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What fictional world or universe would you most like to live in and why?**

## Watch the video - "Session 5: New Commands and a New Covenant" (11 minutes)

[Session 5. New Commands and a New Covenant](#)

## Discuss

1. What do the Ten Commandments reveal about the nature of God and His desire to have a relationship with us?
2. God spoke to Moses "as one speaks to a friend". How would you rate your relationship to God on a scale of 1-10? (1 = Total stranger to 10 = Close friend)
3. How did Israel go from "everything the Lord has said we will do," to building a false god in barely over a month? Why is it so easy to become forgetful of God's mercies?
4. After punishing the Israelites for the golden calf, Moses immediately sought reconciliation with God. How should believers today hold one another accountable? How can we do this gracefully?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What is a memorable piece of advice you have received?**

## Watch the video - "Session 6: Wandering" (10 minutes)

[Session 6. Wandering](#)

## Discuss

1. The manna and quail episode ended in a severe plague. What Upper Story lessons was God trying to teach? How do they apply to us today?
2. Israel's rebellion led to a 40 year punishment and kept an entire generation from seeing the Promised Land. How might you minister to someone whose life choices resulted in irrevocable consequences?
3. Despite his years of service, Moses' disobedience kept him from entering the Promised Land. What did Moses do wrong? Do you agree with the punishment? What does this teach you about God's expectations for leadership?
4. Moses instructed Israel to pass the commandments down to their children. What is your role in teaching the next generation? What are some practical ways you can serve as a spiritual parent, grandparent, or mentor?
5. Ask the group "What else?" *(This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.)*

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**If you won the lottery, what would you do with the money?**

## Watch the video - "Session 7: The Battle Begins" (10 minutes)

[Session 7. The Battle Begins](#)

## Discuss

1. How does God's command to annihilate entire cities fit into the Upper Story of the Bible? In what way do these battle stories fit into God's Upper Story? (review p. 86)
2. Some people doubt the Bible because of miracles like Joshua's "long day" (p. 97). But some people, like Rahab, come to believe in God because of His miraculous works. Discuss how you might respond to the skeptic who discounts the miraculous as myth.
3. What character traits of Joshua most impress you? Which of those would you like to be known for?
4. Joshua is known for his statement "As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD". How can you lead your household to serve the Lord?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What subject or topic would you say you have the most expertise in?**

## Watch the video - "Session 8: A Few Good Men ... and Women" (11 minutes)

[Session 8. A Few Good Men...and Women](#)

## Discuss

1. Israel is constantly running from the true God to other false gods. What are some of the false gods in our culture today? Which of them have you trusted?
2. Do you think that the Israelites did a good job of passing their faith to the next generation? How can we do this better in the church and in our own families?
3. Do you think Gideon's request for a sign was an act of faith or an act of faithlessness? Does his faith change over time?
4. Where do you see God's grace in this chapter?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What are you currently curious about?**

## Watch the video - "Session 9: The Faith of a Foreign Woman" (12 minutes)

[Session 9. The Faith of a Foreign Woman](#)

## Discuss

1. Compare Naomi's attitude at the beginning and end of this story. How does her view of God and the Upper Story change?
2. What specific examples of strong faith and responsible living can you find in the characters of Ruth and Boaz?
3. What does it mean to be redeemed? How does Boaz's redeeming of Ruth compare to our redemption found in Jesus?
4. What some people might call coincidence others call divine providence. What are some key examples of God's divine providence in this story?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**If you were to show someone around your hometown, what is the first place you would take them that holds meaning for you?**

Watch the video - "Session 10: Standing Tall, Falling Hard" (11 minutes)

[Session 10. Standing Tall, Falling Hard](#)

## Discuss

1. What can we learn about prayer from Hannah and Samuel?
2. The Israelites and the Philistines both treated the Ark of the Covenant more like a good-luck charm rather than the sacred presence of God. How might people today try to manipulate God for similar gain?
3. Samuel is hurt when he sees that the Israelites want a king like other nations, instead of recognizing God as their king. Do you ever struggle with a desire to be like the culture around you, instead of letting God rule your life?
4. Imagine you have a friend like Saul, who keeps taking matters into his own hands and ignoring what God's word teaches him. What advice would you give him?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**If you came with a disclaimer, what would it be?**

## Watch the video - "Session 11: From Shepherd to King" (13 minutes)

[Session 11. From Shepherd to King](#)

## Discuss

1. In his battle with Goliath, "David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him" (pg. 149). When have you had the courage to face down an impending conflict?
2. What was the fundamental reason for David's choice to spare Saul's life in their encounter at En-Gedi (p. 153-154)? How does this choice reflect David's view of submission and of God?
3. What specific covenant promises did God make with David? How is this covenant with David later fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 1:32-33)?
4. Identify some episodes from David's life that demonstrate David's clear view of God's Upper Story. How were his choices influenced by that view?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What are you currently learning about yourself?**

## Watch the video - "Session 12: The Trials of a King" (13 minutes)

[Session 12. The Trials of a King](#)

## Discuss

1. What were the steps in David's sin and cover-up? Compare David's steps leading to sin with Eve's (p. 5). How can your group help hold each other accountable to guard against the same pathway?
2. Psalm 32 describes what David felt before and after his confession (p. 165-166). If all our sins were forgiven by Jesus dying on the cross, then what value does confession have today? Why is it so important?
3. Who did David sin against? (Bathsheba, Uriah or God?) Find examples in the text that prove your point. What does this teach us about sin?
4. Look back at Psalm 23 (p. 173). Why do you think this passage continues to be so meaningful to people?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What emotion have you felt the most this week, and why?**

Watch the video - "Session 13: The King Who Had It All" (10 minutes)

[Session 13. The King Who Had It All](#)

## Discuss

1. Look at Solomon's prayer of dedication. What does this teach you about how you should approach God?
2. Using what you have learned about Israel's history in previous chapters of The Story, why did Solomon make the dedication of the temple such a big event? What would it have been like to experience it first hand?
3. As Solomon grew older, he was a rich and established ruler, but he did not apply the wisdom that defined his early career. How can you continue to seek wisdom, even after you have experienced success?
4. Solomon's failures began when he married women who served other gods. Why is it important for a husband and wife to both be committed Christians? What advice would you give someone who is considering dating a non-Christian?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What conditions seem to bring out your best self? How about your worst self?**

Watch the video - "Session 14: A Kingdom Torn in Two" (13 minutes)

[Session 14. A Kingdom Torn in Two](#)

## Discuss

1. Rehoboam sought counsel to make an important decision (p. 194) and so did Jeroboam (p. 196). What criteria did each seem to use in evaluating the counsel of others? What makes for wise counsel?
2. The split of Israel and Judah led to continual warfare for hundreds of years. What issues divide God's people today? Share with your group practical ways to promote unity at Canvas and unity with believers from other churches.
3. Under King Rehoboam, the people of Judah "engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites." The idolatry in the culture had become the idolatry of God's people. In what ways are God's people today similar to the non-Christian culture all around us? How are we different?
4. What is the standard used in this chapter for a good king? What kind of standards are you setting for the generations that will follow you?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**How do you most naturally express love to the people you care about?**

## Watch the video - "Session 15: God's Messengers" (12 minutes)

[Session 15. God's Messengers](#)

## Discuss

1. What is it about Ahab and Jezebel that made God angry? How does this relate to the first two commandments?
2. What is the role of the prophets in this chapter? Was their role predicting the future or calling the people to repentance? Does God still send prophets today?
3. Do you see any similarities between the prophecies of Amos and Hosea and our world today? What do you think they would say to the leaders of Victoria/BC/Canada?
4. Evaluate the prophets' ministries. On what basis would you judge whether or not they were successful? How should we evaluate success in our work for God?
5. Ask the group "What else?" *(This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.)*

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**Which person from the bible do you most relate to, and why?**

Watch the video - "Session 16: The Beginning of the End (of the Kingdom of Israel)" (12 minutes)

[Session 16. The Beginning of the End \(of the Kingdom of Israel\)](#)

## Discuss

1. Why did God send the northern kingdom into captivity? (2 Kings 17:7-17) Compare God's actions against Israel to Moses' warning in Deut. 28:45-50 and 30:1-5. What do you notice?
2. God frequently reminded Israel of examples of his faithfulness, such as their deliverance from Egypt (p. 219). What past experiences have you had that remind you of God's faithfulness? (See Romans 8:31)
3. How have you seen people respond when they receive just consequences for sinful actions? How should a Christian respond to the consequences of sin and the discipline of God?
4. King Sennacherib of Assyria sent his envoy to Jerusalem to persuade King Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem to surrender peacefully, claiming he came on God's orders (p. 221). Isaiah's message to Hezekiah said otherwise. How do you evaluate people who claim to have a word from God?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What is the quality you value most in a friend?**

## Watch the video - "Session 17: The Kingdom's Fall" (12 minutes)

[Session 17. The Kingdom's Fall](#)

## Discuss

1. List the evil things that King Manasseh did to make God angry (p. 231-232). How did Judah compare to the pagan nations that God had driven out of the Promised Land? (See the first full paragraph on p. 86 for insight.)
2. During the exile, God gave Ezekiel the mission of sharing his word with the Jews living in a foreign land. How does the Christian mission today resemble this situation?
3. After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah grieved for his beloved city (p. 243-245). What did Jeremiah believe about the Upper Story of God? What specifically can we apply to our own lives from Jeremiah's lament and praise?
4. What did God promise He would do for Israel despite their great sin, their exile, and their stone hearts (p. 245-246)? What does this teach you about God's heart for his people?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What activities or environments spark the most joy for you?**

## Watch the video - "Session 18: Daniel in Exile" (12 minutes)

[Session 18. Daniel in Exile](#)

## Discuss

1. Look back at God's covenant with Abraham (p. 13 or Gen. 12:1-3). How was it fulfilled through Daniel and his three friends?
2. How did Daniel regard the various governmental authorities? Look up Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, and Titus 3:1. How should Christians regard governments?
3. How did God show Himself to be sovereign over human kingdoms and rulers? How does this help you view our world today?
4. Jeremiah's message (p. 260-261) was sent in a letter from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon. What were God's Lower Story and Upper Story promises to them?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What is one funny but embarrassing memory you have from growing up?**

## Watch the video - "Session 19: The Return Home" (13 minutes)

[Session 19. The Return Home](#)

## Discuss

1. How did God fulfill His word spoken by Jeremiah? Look up Jer. 25:12 and 29:10. What happened to the king of Babylon? (See p. 256-257 for further insight.)
2. Why do you think many of the exiles chose to stay in Babylon instead of returning home to the Promised Land? How do you suppose God viewed that choice?
3. How did the temple builders and worshipers regard their covenant, the Law of Moses (p. 264-265)? Compare their view of the Law to the Israelites' attitude before the exile.
4. Zechariah's message claimed that people from other nations would be attracted to the religion and the God of the Jews (p. 269-270). What was to be the basis for this attraction? In what ways should Canvas be attractive to outsiders?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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**What hobby do you wish you had more time to pursue?**

## Watch the video - "Session 20: The Queen of Beauty and Courage" (14 minutes)

[Session 20. The Queen of Beauty and Courage](#)

## Discuss

1. The book of Esther has been called the "godless book" because God's name is never mentioned. Prayer, the Law, sacrifices, and temple worship are also conspicuously absent. Where can you find God's supernatural blessings in the story anyway?
2. Look up Isaiah 48:20 and Jeremiah 29:10, 50:8, 51:6. What do these verses say about the Jews like Mordecai and Esther who stayed behind? What do you learn about God through His providential care of the Jews outside of the Promised Land?
3. Review the correspondence between Mordecai and Esther concerning an appeal to the king (p. 281-282). What is the relationship between God's providence and our responsibility?
4. How does the Lower Story of Esther fit into the covenant that God made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3)? How does it fit with God's Upper Story of redemption?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

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# THE STORY



## Welcome and Prayer

*Have someone open the group with prayer, and pray that God would lead your time and speak to you through one another.*

## Opening Question

*The goal of our groups is to study the Bible while making meaningful personal relationships. As we learn more about each other, we build trust and can strengthen each other through the discussion.*

*"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17*

**What is a simple pleasure you have that brings you delight?**

Watch the video - "Session 21: Rebuilding the Walls" (10 minutes)

[Session 21. Rebuilding the Walls](#)

## Discuss

1. What are the things that Ezra devoted himself to? (p. 292). What is significant about this order that also applies to the successful Christian life of every believer?
2. What does Nehemiah teach us about prayer? Do you notice any patterns in his prayer life?
3. Years after the walls had been rebuilt, the prophet Malachi was sent to correct the priests and the people (p. 302). What were they doing that dishonored God?
4. According to Malachi, what is the correlation between one's relationship with God and one's treatment of their spouse?
5. Ask the group "What else?" (*This simple question might present an opportunity for unresolved questions to thoughtfully be discussed by the group.*)

## Prayer

*The goal of the ending prayer time is to be intentional based on the reading/sermon/discussion.*

- How can we pray for each other based on what we've talked about?
- How else can we intentionally pray for one another?