

# The Bible Metanarrative

## Telling ALL the Good News

**“For I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole purpose (will, plan, counsel) of God.”      Apostle Paul    Acts 20:27**

### **Purpose**

Many of the internationals that we seek to impact have very little knowledge of the Bible. How will you make the message of the Bible clear to them? One student commented after a year in a Bible discussion that she became lost in the details of each story and did not understand the big picture of what the Bible is about? The purpose of this study is to enable you to summarize in your own words the overarching Bible narrative as one connected, continuous account of God and His relationship with this world and with each of us.

### **Objectives**

This may be one of the most challenging Bible studies you have ever attempted. The goal is for you to be able to tell the story of the Bible from beginning to end as one continuous, connected account of God and the history of His relationship to all people on earth. After telling the Bible’s account of earth’s earliest years, you will then cover approximately 2000 years of recorded history from the life of Abraham to the formation of the Christian church. You will study the ‘forest’ (books) rather than the individual ‘trees’ (verses) of the Bible. Try your best to retell the passage (the application each week) using your own words in such a way that a person who has never read any of the Bible would be able to follow and be captivated by your account (rather than being confused and bored). As you read your accounts to one another, you can help each other by evaluating the content and the clarity of your narrative.

### **Discussion Guide**

Have one person read or tell their account for the given passage. Then have others comment on how their account differs. What else did you include and why? What did you exclude and why? Share any relevant passages of Scripture. Have another person read their account, focusing on the sections where they differ from what has already been read. After listening to each person, what would you like to change in your account? How much can you all agree on to include in your narrative?

### **Time Frame**

- 10 weeks
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## **Lesson 1**

## Creation – Genesis 1 and 2

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the account of creation found in Genesis 1,2 in about 500 words without eliminating any of the key points of the passage.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points of the passage by reading the passage every day for a week. Make an outline of the key points.
- Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
- Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
  - Where did we come from?
  - What does it mean to be human?
  - Is the world good?
  - What is our purpose in life? Why are we here?
  - Is there such a thing as right and wrong? Truth?

1. What can we learn about God from this account of creation?
2. What common phrase is repeated at the end of each day? What does this show us about God?
3. Do you see any correlation between days 1-3 and 4-6?
4. Why do you think God created the world?
5. What can we learn about mankind? How are they different than the rest of creation? How did God make humans different from the animals?
6. In what ways do you think mankind is made in God's likeness? In what ways are people like God?
7. What is the relationship between God and mankind? What does God say to the man? What does God tell him to do?
8. What do you think is the significance of the 7<sup>th</sup> day?
9. What do the two trees in the middle of the garden tell us about God? About mankind? About their relationship to each other?
10. Why do you think God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden?
11. What is not good in the garden? Who discovered that? What does this show us about God?
12. What does man need a helper for?
13. What does it mean that they were naked and felt no shame?

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account.

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## Lesson 2      Genesis 3 - The Fall

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the account of the Fall Genesis 3 in about 500 words without eliminating any of the key points of the passage.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points of the passage by reading the passage every day for a week. Make an outline of the key points.
- Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
- Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
  - Why do people have such a hard time getting along with each other?
  - What is the meaning of shame?
  - What is man's basic problem? What is wrong with the world?
  - Is the physical, natural world all that exists? Is there an unseen, spiritual realm?
  - Is there such a thing as evil?

### Read Genesis 3

1. What do you think is the serpent's goal in speaking to the woman?
2. How did the serpent convince Eve to disobey God?
3. Satan attacked the truthful answers to the following questions. What is true? What is right? and Who am I? What does this chapter teach are the answers to these questions?
4. How would you define sin from this account?
5. How did Adam and Eve's relationship with each other change after they disobeyed?
6. Who did they blame for their error?
7. How was their relationship with God changed?
8. Who did God curse?
9. What was the woman's punishment? Man's?
10. How does God show His love for Adam and Eve even after they disobeyed Him?
11. What does God promise He will do in 3:15?
12. Why does God make them clothes when they already have them?
13. Why do you think God wants to keep them out of the garden?

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account.

### Lesson 3    Genesis 4-11

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points found in Genesis 4-11 in about **500** words without eliminating any of the key points of the passage.

#### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points of the passage by reading the passage several times.    Make an outline of the key points.
- Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
- Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
  - What is wrong with the world?    What are the world's biggest problems?
  - Is man basically good or evil?    How do we define good or evil?
  - What is ethnicity?    Where did it originate?
  - Is the God of the Bible connected with any one country or culture at this point?

1. What happens with Adam and Eve's family and descendants?
2. How would you describe life on the earth in the time of Noah? What is the world filled with?    How does this contrast with what God created it to be filled with?    Gen 1:27-28
3. How does God eventually respond?
4. How is Noah different?
5. What does the flood account teach us about God?
6. What does the flood account teach us about mankind?
7. Does mankind' basic nature change as a result of the flood?    What does change?
8. What does Jesus say the flood account should be a reminder to us about today?
  - Mt 24:36-44
  - 2 Pet 3:1-13
9. Why did the people later build a tower? What was its purpose?
10. How did God respond? Why did He do this? Was it punishment?
11. Why do you think the Bible first lists the nations of the earth and then the story of how they came to be later?
12. Consider what significance the role of nations has in the overall Biblical narrative.

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words.

## Lesson 4    Genesis 12-50    Abraham and the patriarchs

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points found in Genesis 12-50 in about **500** words without eliminating any of the key points of the passage.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points of the passage by reading/reviewing the passage.    Make an outline of the key points.
- Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
- Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
  - What is the nature of faith?    Can it be ‘blind’(without reason)?
  - Can humans know or predict the future?    Will science one day enable us to do this? Why do people so much want to know the future?

1. What title would you put on this passage in terms of how it fits into the entire narrative?
2. Abraham is obviously a key character in the Biblical account. Why? What are the key events in his life?    What does God promise to Abram and why do you think He does this?
3. How does Abram respond? How would you describe Abraham?
4. At what point in time do you think Abraham truly believes God and has faith?    Is it Gen15:6 or some other time?
5. What do the New Testament writers say is important to remember about Abraham?
  - a. Galatians 3:6-9, 16-18
  - b. Romans 4:1-3, 16, 20-21
6. Why do you think God reveals the future of his family to him in Genesis 15:7-18?    What does this tell us about God?
7. What is the significance of the events in Genesis 18-19? What does this show us about God’s nature?
8. What is the lesson of chapter 22 and the sacrifice of the promised son?
9. What lesson does the author of Hebrews say we can learn from Abraham and his descendants? Hebrews 11:17-22

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words.

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## Lesson 5 Moses Passover Law Book of Exodus 1-24

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points found in the book of Exodus in about **500** words.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points of the passage by reading/reviewing the passage. Make an outline of the key points.
  - Review how the Bible Project summarizes this book. What would you add, delete, or change?
  - Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
  - Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
    - Does mankind need a standard of right and wrong for all people? Where would this standard come from?
    - How is slavery a picture of mankind's condition? What does it mean to be truly free?
    - Can there be more than one true God, more than one true religion?
1. How would you summarize Moses' early life, His encounter with God in the desert and His call to free the Israelites from slavery?
  2. How does God accomplish, through Moses, this impossible task of delivering His people from this most powerful nation?
    - a. The plagues Ex 6:7-8 Ex 7:5 7:15-18 Ex 11:1,4-5
  3. What significant role does the Passover play? What significance does God place on this one event?  
Exodus 12
    - a. Consider Passover in the NT.
      - Jn 1:29,
      - 1 Cor 5:6-8
      - Luke 22:7-8, 14-20
  4. What happens after they are told to leave Egypt? Continue the story to Mt Sinai.
  5. Mt Sinai. Exodus 19
    - a. How does God summarize what He has done for His people? 19:4-6
  6. Exodus 20 What is the purpose of the Laws God gives to them? How would you summarize them? Why were the people afraid of God?

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words.

## Lesson 6 Exodus 25-40 Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy Tabernacle, Sacrifices

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points found in the book of Exodus in about **500** words.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points of the passage by reading/reviewing the passage. Make an outline of the key points.
- Review how the Bible Project summarizes these books. What is important about the Tabernacle. Sacrifice and Atonement. What would you add, delete, or change?
- Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
- Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
  - How does forgiveness work? How does our judicial system offer ‘forgiveness’ for breaking the laws of the state, both minor and major violations?
  - What is the nature of love? Is it feelings, actions, decisions?

1. What was God’s purpose in telling them to build a Tabernacle?
2. Why was there a need for a sacrificial system? What did it accomplish? How does a holy God maintain a relationship with His people when they sin, when they break His commands?
3. Summarize the next 40 years in Israel’s history that gets them to the edge of the promised land.
4. Summarize Moses’ last speech to the people before his death as found in Deuteronomy. What would you say is God’s heart/desire for His people? Dt 30 Dt 10:12-22 Dt 6:4-5

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words.

## Lesson 7 History of Israel Joshua Judges Samuel Kings Prophets David - Messiah

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points regarding the history of the nation of Israel from the time they enter the promised land until they are taken captive in about **500** words.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points of the passage by reading/reviewing the passage. Make an outline of the key points.
  - Review how the Bible Project summarizes these books. What would you add, delete, or change?
  - Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
  - Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
    - Has God spoken to people in the past (prophets)? How can we know this for sure?
1. Summarize how God now keeps His promise to give the descendants of Abraham the promised land.
  2. Summarize the period of the Judges. What is the main problem?
  3. What is the role of a prophet? Samuel
  4. Why do the people want a King to rule over them in place of God Himself?
  5. Who is David? Why is he so important in the Bible narrative? 1 Sam 8:1-9, 19-22
    - a. 2 Sam 7:4-17
    - b. What does God promise to David?
    - c. How is this promise of God to David connected to His promises to Abraham?
  6. Do David's descendants remain faithful to the LORD?
    - a. 1 Kings 2:4, 8:25, 11:11-13
  7. As the exile approaches, God's prophets give hope that all is not lost. What message do they bring?
    - a. the people of Israel would again "serve the LORD, their God, and David, their king, whom I will raise up for them" (Jeremiah 30:9).
    - b. Jeremiah stresses that the coming king will fulfill the condition of righteousness (in Jer. 23:5-6): "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness'"
    - c. Jeremiah 23:5 "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch"
    - d. Ezekiel looks to the future salvation of God's people and speaks God's word (in 37:23f): "I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them and they shall be my people and I will be their God. My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd"
    - e. Ezekiel 34:23: "I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd."
    - f. Ezekiel 37:24: "My servant David will be their king, and they will have only one shepherd. They will obey my regulations and be careful to keep my decrees."
    - g. Micah 5:2
    - h. Hosea 3:5

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words.



## Lesson 8 Exile, Return, 400 years of silence Prophets – promises Messiah's birth

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points regarding the history of the nation of Israel from their captivity until and including the birth of Jesus in about **500** words.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points made by the prophets of Israel and how the birth of Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. How do you think the returned Jewish exiles and those that remained scattered felt about the promises of a King like David?
- Review how the Bible Project summarizes Isaiah, The Messiah, Exile, Covenants. What would you add, delete, or change?
- Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
- Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
  - Does the existence of Biblical prophecies being fulfilled in history prove that we can trust the Bible? Why or why not?

1. What does Isaiah have to say about the nature of God? How is He unique? What proof is there that He is the only true God?
  - a. Is 44:6-20
  - b. Is 48:3-6

### Additional Prophecies to consider reading together

- Is 45:1-7, 13 Cyrus predicted to be used of God
- Is 48:17-18 God's heart toward us and His commands
- Is 40:10-18 and 25-31 God's greatness and personal care combined.

2. What does Isaiah have to say about the coming Servant of God or Messiah? Who will He be and what will He do?
  - a. Isaiah 9:6,7
  - b. Isaiah 52:13-53:12
3. What do Jeremiah and Ezekiel record about the coming age of the Messiah? How will it be different.
  - a. Jeremiah 31:31-34
  - b. Ezekiel 36:24-28
4. How does the NT connect the birth of Jesus with the Messiah? Why is this important? How is this child described?
  - a. Mt 1:1, 18-25
  - b. Luke 1:26-38
  - c. Luke 1:68-75
  - d. Luke 2:11

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words.

## Lesson 9 Messiah's life, death and resurrection Matthew Mark Luke John

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points regarding the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus in about **500** words.

### Process

- Discover for yourself what you think are the key points in Jesus life and teachings
- Review how the Bible Project summarizes the Gospels? What would you add, delete, or change?
- Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
- Consider what worldview questions this passage addresses and how it answers them.
  - Do you think miracles are possible? Why or why not?
  - How can we know Jesus actually resurrected from the grave? How important is this to our faith?
  - How do we know we can trust the accounts in the Bible as historically accurate?

1. What do you think is the importance of Jesus' miracle birth, having no human father?
2. How is Jesus introduced to the world as an adult? How is Jesus' coming described by John the Baptist?
3. What is Jesus' message?
4. Why did He choose disciples to follow Him?
5. What is the purpose of the miracles? Mk 2:1-12, 4:41 What kinds of miracles does He perform?
6. What is the essence of His teachings? What is the significance of the 'kingdom'?
7. What seems to be a turning point in His ministry based the answer to this question? Mk 8:27 What now changes in the emphasis of His teaching? :31, 34
8. How does Jesus prepare His disciples for His departure? What does He teach them?
9. His suffering and death.
10. Burial
11. Resurrection appearances

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words.

## Lesson 10 The Church Acts Epistles End of the age

Goal – to be able to re-tell in your own words the key points regarding the birth, growth and expansion of the Christian faith, how these Christ followers are to live and what the Bible teaches about the future in about **500** words.

### Process

- Outline the books of Acts. What are the key turning points in the book? How does Christianity grow to become a world religion instead of just a sect of Judaism?
  - Review how the Bible Project summarizes the book of Acts, Philippians, 1,2,3 John, and Revelation? What would you add, delete, or change?
  - Use the discussion questions below to help you to think deeper. What other questions do you have?
  - Consider what worldview questions this section addresses and how it answers them.
    - Isn't Christianity a 'Western' religion? How would you answer that?
    - Is time as we know it linear or cyclical?
    - Is there a spiritual world or only a material world?
1. In Acts 3:24,25 notice how Peter in his proclamation of the gospel connects back to the Old Testament. Why does He do this? Contrast this with how Paul shares with mostly Gentiles in Athens in Acts 17:24-28.
  2. What is the gospel?
    - a. Gal 3:7-9,14
    - b. Romans 1:1-4
    - c. 1 Cor 15:3,4
    - d. Eph 2:11-14
  3. How are Christians to live? Pick two passages that you think best summarizes this. One from the Gospels and one from the rest of the NT.
  4. Consider what the Bible reveals about the future. How would you summarize this? Mt 24, Revelation 7:9, 11:15, 22:16

Now write a half page summary (about 500 words) that retells the major points of this account in your own words. Make sure that this summary includes a concise statement of what it means to be a Christ follower who will live for eternity with Jesus the Christ (Messiah).