

Living Out God's Story

A Daily Companion for the Eight Weeks

Welcome to Living Out God's Story

We're glad you're here.

For the next eight weeks you'll walk through the whole story of the Bible, slowly, with other people, and with your whole heart. The idea behind these weeks is simple: your story follows the same pattern as God's story.

Think about the stories you've loved most, in books, in films, or in your own family. Most of them move through four parts. Something good begins. Something goes wrong. Someone comes to the rescue. What was broken is made new. The Bible tells that story on the largest scale imaginable, in four parts called Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, and the same four-part story is being written in your life.

You were created on purpose, in the image of God. You have felt the Fall in the brokenness and disconnection everyone carries. You have been offered redemption through the rescue Jesus came to bring. And you are being drawn toward restoration, the day God makes all things new, including you. To understand your own story, you need to know the story you were born into. These eight weeks will help you see God's story clearly, find your place in it, and recognize that your life has never been random.

This story is meant to be read with other people.

How the eight weeks work

Each week follows the same rhythm.

- **Five daily readings.** Each day gives you a short Scripture passage, a reflection on it, a journal prompt, and a prayer prompt. Fifteen quiet minutes a day is enough.
- **A weekly group gathering.** Each week your group meets to talk through what you read. The discussion guide for each week is in this book, so you can come ready to share.

The eight weeks are grouped into four parts, two weeks each: **Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.** The first week of each part explores God's story as Scripture tells it. The second week looks at how your own story follows the same pattern. By the end, you'll start seeing that pattern everywhere.

A few words before you begin

- **Take your time.** You don't need to finish this book fast. If you miss a day, pick up where you left off.
- **Be honest in your journal.** The journal prompts are for you alone. The more honestly you write, the more these weeks will mean to you.

- **Walk this with other people.** Whether these weeks change your life depends a great deal on whether you walk them with others. Show up to your group, share your story, and listen to the stories around your table. Some things happen in conversation that never happen on a page.
- **Think about who you could bring.** Nearly everyone you know is living in one of these four parts of the story right now, and many of them don't know there's a bigger story they belong to. Keep someone in mind as you go. There's room for them at the table.

Welcome. We'll begin where the Bible begins.

Diana Rush & Josh Welchel

Part One: Creation

Weeks 1 and 2

Every story begins somewhere. Before the conflict and before the rescue, a world is made, characters are formed, and the story is given a setting. God's story opens this way, and so does yours. For the next two weeks we'll explore the first part of God's story and the first chapter of your own.

- **Week 1, God's Story:** how the universe, the earth, and humanity came into being by God's design.
- **Week 2, Your Story:** how that same Creator formed you on purpose and with care.

Week One

In the Beginning: God's Story and Ours

The big idea

The universe began with God. To understand your own story, you first need to know the story you were born into.

The first line of the Bible, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," gives meaning and purpose to everything that exists, including you. This week we'll spend time in Genesis 1 and 2 and meet God from two directions. He is transcendent, so far above us that He speaks and galaxies appear. He is also immanent, so near that He kneels in the dirt to form a human being and breathe life into him.

As you read each day, watch God move the world from chaos to order and from emptiness to fullness, calling each part of it good. He still works this way in people's lives, and He may be working this way in yours.

Day 1 | Order Out of Chaos

Read: Genesis 1:1–13

Focus: "In the beginning, God..." (Genesis 1:1)

In the Hebrew picture of creation, each day begins in the evening, in darkness, and ends in the morning, in light. Day after day God takes what is formless and empty and gives it shape, limits, and beauty. The dark does not alarm Him. He speaks into it, and He never asks the chaos for permission. He says, "Let there be," and it is.

The first thing the Bible teaches about God is that He brings order out of chaos. Chaos doesn't force His hand. He makes good things because making good things is who He is.

That matters for more than the origin of the universe. If your life feels formless right now, empty in some places and dark in others, God is not overwhelmed by it. From the first verse of the Bible, He has been making something good out of what looks like nothing. And before you did anything at all, before you could earn or prove or fail, He was already a Creator. Your life began as His gift.

Journal. Where in your life does something feel "formless and empty" right now? What would it look like to invite the God who brings order out of chaos into that place?

Prayer. Bring God the one formless and empty place you named today. Don't try to fix it first. Hand it to Him, and ask Him to begin His work there.

Day 2 | And It Was Good

Read: Genesis 1:14–25

Focus: "And God saw that it was good." (Genesis 1:25)

Again and again in the creation account, God stops, looks at what He has made, and calls it good. The sun and moon are good. The seas full of life are good. The birds and the wild animals are good. The Creator of the universe pauses to enjoy His work.

Most of us picture God as either distant and uninterested or stern and disappointed. Genesis 1 shows neither. It shows a God who enjoys what He makes. Beauty, abundance, color, and variety were His ideas. Three miles down in the ocean, where no human will ever see them, there are creatures that glow in the dark, and they exist because beauty pleases the God who made them.

Many of us carry a quiet belief that God is frustrated with His world, and frustrated with us. The God of Genesis 1 delights in what He made. As you go through today, look for one thing, a color, an animal, or the sky, that God called good long before you noticed it. He has been enjoying it the whole time.

Journal. What part of creation fills you with wonder? What might that wonder tell you about the One who made it?

Prayer. Thank God for the beauty He made simply because it pleased Him. Then ask Him to silence the lie that He is disappointed in you, and to help you believe He delights in you the way He delights in everything He made.

Day 3 | Made in His Image

Read: Genesis 1:26–31

Focus: "So God created human beings in his own image." (Genesis 1:27)

For five days God speaks creation into being: "Let there be." On the sixth day the language changes: "Let us make human beings in our image." The whole account has been building toward this moment.

The way you were made says something remarkable about your worth. You bear the image of God. The mountains, the oceans, and the stars do not. You do. Consider your body alone. A single strand of your DNA holds the information that makes you who you are, and your blood vessels, laid end to end, would circle the earth nearly four times. God made you with great care and intention, and when He finished making humanity, He called it "very good."

Some of us struggle to believe we have any value at all. Your value was settled on the sixth day, long before anyone formed an opinion of you, including you. You bear God's image, and nothing anyone says about you is more true than that.

Journal. How would today be different if you fully believed you bear God's image, and that your worth comes from Him and not from your performance?

Prayer. Tell God honestly how easy or hard it is for you to believe you bear His image. Ask Him to make this truth go deeper than your performance, your failures, or anyone's opinion, until "very good" is what you hear when you think about yourself.

Day 4 | The God Who Comes Close

Read: Genesis 2:4-25

Focus: "The two of them were naked, and they felt no shame." (Genesis 2:25)

Genesis 1 shows God on the mountaintop, vast and powerful, speaking worlds into being. Genesis 2 brings Him down into a garden and onto His knees in the dirt. He forms the man from the dust and breathes life into him. He plants a garden. He gives the man work as a joy and an adventure: explore this, develop this, take care of this. When God sees that the man is alone, He notices, and He responds by making a companion.

This is God as immanent: near, attentive, and deeply relational.

The chapter ends with a line that is easy to rush past. The man and the woman were naked and felt no shame. They had a relationship with God and with each other so whole that there was nothing to hide, nothing to defend, and nothing to forgive, because nothing had gone wrong yet. We were made for that kind of connection. Most of us long for it and can't quite find it. Pay attention to that longing this week. It points back to Eden, and forward to the One who is making a way home.

Journal. Where do you most long for connection without shame? What would it mean to bring that longing honestly to God today?

Prayer. Tell God where you most long to be fully known without shame. Ask the God who came close in the garden to come close to you there, and to begin healing whatever makes you want to hide.

Day 5 | Creation Speaks

Read: Psalm 19:1–4 and Romans 1:18–20

Focus: "The heavens declare the glory of God." (Psalm 19:1)

All week you've watched God create. Today, listen to what creation says about Him. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." Every sunrise, every mountain range, and every newborn's cry tells the world about God without using a word.

Paul goes further. Ever since the world was made, he says, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen in what He made, so that no one has an excuse. You don't have to travel anywhere to find evidence of God. He has signed His name across everything He made.

God has always left evidence of Himself. What we need is to slow down long enough to notice it.

This first week leads into everything ahead. The same God whose fingerprints cover the universe has left them on you. Next week we'll move from the whole universe to a single life, yours, and begin tracing where He has been at work in your story from the beginning.

Journal. Where have you "heard" God through creation this week, in a moment, a place, or something that filled you with wonder? What do you think He was saying?

Prayer. Ask God to keep opening your eyes to the places He's been speaking, in creation and in your own life. As this first week ends, ask Him to begin showing you His fingerprints on your story.

Discussion Guide | Week One

Connect

What's one place, creature, or view in nature that never fails to take your breath away? Why that one?

Into the Story

This week we saw that the whole Bible, and your whole life, follows a four-part story: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. We started where the Bible starts, in the beginning with God, and met Him from two directions. In Genesis 1 He is transcendent, speaking creation from chaos into order. In Genesis 2 He is immanent, kneeling close to form the first people and walk with them.

Into the Word

1. The Bible opens with God bringing order out of chaos, speaking light into darkness and form into what was "formless and empty." What part of your life feels formless and empty right now? What would it look like to trust God with it?
2. Seven times in Genesis 1, God calls what He made "good," and He calls humanity "very good." When you picture how God feels about His world, and about you, does the word delighted come to mind? Why or why not? What has shaped the way you picture God's attitude toward you?
3. Genesis 1 shows a powerful God who speaks the universe into being. Genesis 2 shows a close, hands-on God who forms us from the dust and breathes life into us. Which picture of God comes more naturally to you? Which one do you need to know better?

Into Your Life

4. The first humans were "naked and felt no shame." They had nothing to hide from God or from each other. What do you imagine that felt like? Where in your life do you most want that kind of connection today?
5. The teaching said your value was settled on the sixth day, when God made people in His image, long before you did anything to earn it or lose it. How would it change someone's life to believe their worth comes from God and not from their performance? Where do you have a hard time believing that about yourself?

Respond

- Go around your table and share one place you noticed God's fingerprints this week.
- Close in prayer. Thank God for being the Creator, and ask Him to open your eyes this week to your own origin story.

Looking ahead

Next week gets personal: Your Origin Story, Discovering God's Hand in Your Beginning. Come ready to talk about when you first became aware that God was there.

Week Two

Your Origin Story: Discovering God's Hand in Your Beginning

The big idea

Your story didn't start with you. The God who designed the universe designed you, on purpose and with intention, long before you were aware of Him.

Last week we watched God create the universe. This week we move all the way in to a single life, yours. Every great character has an origin story that explains how they became who they are, and so do you. Your family, your circumstances, and your biology all shaped you, but Scripture goes deeper: your origin story is about a Creator who knit you together on purpose and has been drawing you toward Himself ever since.

This week we'll look at three truths: you were made in God's image, He has known your whole story from the beginning, and He has arranged your life so that you would reach out and find Him.

Day 1 | You Have a Prequel

Read: Genesis 1:26–28

Focus: "So God created human beings in his own image." (Genesis 1:27)

We love a good origin story. Filmmakers learned long ago that a prequel can hold our attention as well as a sequel, because we want to know how the hero became the hero. You have a prequel too. It begins before your parents and your circumstances, with God deciding to make a being who would carry His image into the world.

What does it mean to be made in God's image? One way to understand it: God exists as the Trinity, three persons in one God, and you were designed with three connected parts that reflect Him. Your mind reflects His intelligence. Your body reflects His creativity and craftsmanship. Your spirit was built for a relationship with Him. You are finite and He is infinite, yet your design carries a resemblance to your Maker.

That changes how you see your own beginning. Whether you were planned or a surprise, celebrated or complicated, the circumstances of your birth are not the deepest truth about where you came from. The deepest truth is that the God of the universe intended you and built His likeness into you. You already have meaning, because you already bear His image.

Journal. What part of your origin story, your early years, your family, or where you came from, has shaped who you are? Where might you see God's design even there?

Prayer. Thank God that your beginning was His idea. Ask Him to help you see your origin story the way He sees it, as the careful beginning of someone made in His image.

Day 2 | Knit Together

Read: Psalm 139:13–16

Focus: "You knit me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:13)

King David had watched God take him from a forgotten shepherd boy to the king of Israel.

When he thought about how his life began, he wrote some of the most tender words in Scripture: You knit me together. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Every day of my life was written in your book before one of them came to be.

Before you took a breath, before anyone knew your name, the days of your life were already known to God. He wasn't programming you like a machine. He knew you that closely and loved you that completely. He never questioned whether you should exist, and your value was never up for debate.

David's life was no fairy tale. It held real failure, real wreckage, and real grief alongside the victories. Still, he could say every one of his days was known and held by God. Your story, mistakes included, is held the same way. God saw you when you were "woven together in secret," and He sees whatever season you're in now.

God made you wonderfully. He knew you fully and wanted you completely before you did a single thing.

Journal. David called himself "fearfully and wonderfully made." Is that how you think of yourself? Where do you struggle to believe it?

Prayer. Tell God where it's hard for you to believe you were wonderfully made. Ask Him to make David's words your own, so you know you are fully known and fully wanted.

Day 3 | Fully Known

Read: Psalm 139:1–6

Focus: "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me." (Psalm 139:1)

Before the famous verses about being knit together, Psalm 139 opens with something even more overwhelming: God knows everything about you. He knows when you sit down and when you get up. He knows what you'll say before you say it. He knows your thoughts from far away. There is no version of you, polished or falling apart, public or private, that He hasn't already seen.

For some of us, that is frightening. Being fully known feels dangerous, because the people who know us best can hurt us most. David doesn't pull back from this knowledge. He marvels at it: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me." The One who knows him completely is the same One who knit him together in love. God sees every part of you and cherishes you.

You don't have to perform for God. You don't have to manage your image, hide the parts you're ashamed of, or pretend you're further along than you are. He already knows, and He loves you anyway. He loves the real person He made, and not the cleaned-up version you wish you were. Being fully known and fully loved at the same time is the safest place a person can be.

Journal. What part of yourself do you work hardest to keep hidden, from others or even from God? What would it mean to let the One who already sees it know you fully?

Prayer. Bring God the part of you that you most want to hide. Thank Him that He already knows it, and ask Him to help you rest in being fully known and still fully loved.

Day 4 | Placed on Purpose

Read: Acts 17:24–28

Focus: "In him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Paul once stood before a crowd of Athenian philosophers who worshiped gods they didn't know. He told them that the true God decided when and where every person would live, and that He did it on purpose. God set the boundaries of each person's time and place "so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us."

Think about the century you were born into, your family, your country, your neighborhood, and the particular mix of joy and struggle in your life. According to Paul, none of it is random. God arranged the details of your life with one hope: that somewhere in the middle of it, you would reach out for Him.

That includes the hard parts. The disappointments that left you searching, the questions that wouldn't go away, and the longing nothing else could fill may have been sending you toward God all along. He isn't hiding. He is "not far from any one of us." He placed you here, now, hoping you would turn around and find that He had been near the whole time.

Journal. What experiences in your life have made you reach out for God, or made you want to? Looking back, can you see how they may have been drawing you toward Him?

Prayer. Ask God to show you how He has used the circumstances of your life to draw you toward Himself. Thank Him for placing you here, now, so that you could find Him.

Day 5 | You Can't Outrun His Presence

Read: Psalm 139:7–12

Focus: "Where can I go from your Spirit?" (Psalm 139:7)

"I can never escape from your Spirit!" David writes. "If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there." No height, no depth, no darkness, and no distance puts you out of God's reach. Wherever you have been, including the places you're not proud of and the seasons you felt most alone, He was already there.

That leads to a question worth spending time with as this week ends: Do you remember when you first became aware of Him? For some people it happened looking out at the ocean. For others it was in a hospital waiting room, in a crisis that broke something open, or in a quiet moment in the dark when they realized they weren't alone. That awareness usually comes long before any decision to follow Jesus, and looking back, you can often see how He was leading you toward it.

He was aware of you long before you were aware of Him. From the first page, your origin story has been a story of God being near. Next week the story takes a hard turn as we look at the brokenness that entered the world and our lives. Before we go there, let this settle in: you were made in His image, fully known, placed on purpose, and never out of His reach.

Journal. When did you first become aware of God's presence in your life? Can you trace His fingerprints leading you toward Him even before that moment?

Prayer. Thank God that He was near you long before you noticed Him. Ask Him to bring to mind the moments He has been present in your story, including the ones you didn't recognize at the time.

Discussion Guide | Week Two

Connect

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? How close did your life land to that?

Into the Story

This week we moved from the whole universe to a single life, yours. We looked at three truths about where you came from: you were made in God's image, reflecting Him in mind, body, and spirit; He has known your whole story since before you were born; and He arranged your life so that you would reach out and find Him.

Into the Word

1. Psalm 139 says God has "searched you and known you," every thought and every word before you speak it. Does being fully known by God feel more comforting or more uncomfortable to you? Why?
2. The same psalm says your days were "written in his book" before one of them came to be. How do you hold that together with the real failures, detours, and regrets in a person's life? David's life had plenty of both.
3. In Acts 17, Paul says God set the exact time and place of your life so that you would seek Him. What's your honest reaction to the idea that your family, your struggles, and the time you were born into have been part of how God is drawing you toward Him?

Into Your Life

4. Share a piece of your own origin story. Looking back, where can you see God's hand in it now, even if you couldn't see it at the time?
5. This is the question the whole study keeps coming back to: When did God first become real to you, not just as something you believed, but as someone you knew was there? Share it if you're comfortable. We'll keep coming back to this one.

Respond

- Share one way this week changed how you see your own beginning.
- Close in prayer. Thank God that He knew and wanted each person at your table before they were born.

Looking ahead

Next week the story turns. We move into the second part, the Fall, and look at the brokenness that entered God's good world and ours.

Part Two: The Fall

Weeks 3 and 4

Every story has a moment when things go wrong, a twist that sends everything spinning. God's story has one too, and it is so devastating that the rest of the Bible is devoted to undoing it.

We would rather skip this part of the story. But we can't understand redemption until we've felt what we needed to be rescued from.

- **Week 3, God's Story:** how brokenness entered God's good world, and the first promise of hope.
- **Week 4, Your Story:** how that same brokenness shows up in your life, and why understanding it matters so much.

This is the hard part, and the story doesn't end here.

Week Three

Brokenness Enters the Story: Understanding the Fall

The big idea

Something went wrong. The disconnection between humanity and God explains the world as we actually experience it, and even here God plants a promise of a way back.

For two weeks we've been in the beauty of Eden: a good world, a God who is close, and people made in His image with nothing to be ashamed of. This week the serpent shows up. One question, "Did God really say...?", breaks it all open, and the world has never been the same. If you've ever wondered how a world this beautiful can also be this broken, this week answers that question.

The best single word for what happens is disconnection. Like a phone unplugged from its charger, humanity is cut off from the God who keeps it alive. Watch for two signs of hope God places in the wreckage. The story isn't over.

Day 1 | The Plot Twist

Read: Genesis 3:1–7

Focus: "Did God really say...?" (Genesis 3:1)

The ancient Greeks had a word for the moment in a story when everything reverses: *peripeteia*, the plot twist. Luke learns who his father is. The friend turns out to be the traitor. God's story reaches its twist early, in Genesis 3.

The serpent never denies that God exists, and he never argues theology. He plants doubt about God's goodness: "Did God really say...? You won't really die. God is holding out on you." Beneath every temptation is the suspicion that God can't quite be trusted, that He is keeping something good from you, and that you'd be better off taking matters into your own hands.

Adam and Eve believe it. They reach for the one thing God told them not to take, sure it will make them more than they are, and it makes them less. Their eyes are opened, and what they see is their own shame. The first result of the first sin is hiding.

The serpent's question still works. We fall for it constantly: the quiet suggestion that God is holding back, that His way is the lesser way, and that we'd be freer running our own lives. Naming that lie is the first step toward refusing it.

Journal. Where do you hear your own version of "Did God really say...?" Where are you tempted to believe God is holding out on you?

Prayer. Name the area where you're most tempted to doubt God's goodness. Ask Him to expose the lie underneath it, and to help you trust that His way is for your good.

Day 2 | Disconnection

Read: Genesis 3:8–19

Focus: "I was afraid... so I hid." (Genesis 3:10)

The moment sin enters, every relationship breaks at once. Adam and Eve hide from God, and the friendship that defined them now feels like a threat. Adam turns on Eve, "the woman you put here," and a partnership built for love becomes a blame game. Even the ground turns against them and grows thorns where it once gave fruit freely.

This is the heart of the Fall, and it has a name: disconnection. A computer left unplugged eventually goes dark, and humanity was cut off from the God who is the source of all life. The connection that made worshiping, serving, and loving God our first instinct was severed. We never stopped wanting connection. We lost the One we were made to be connected to.

God does not leave. He comes walking in the garden, calling, "Where are you?" He hasn't lost track of them. They have lost track of Him. The relationship is broken, and God still loves them and still pursues them. What is gone is the easy, face-to-face closeness of Eden, and our relationships, our work, our bodies, and our world all carry the ache of that loss.

Journal. Where do you feel disconnection most: from God, from people, or from the life you long for? When did that disconnection first set in?

Prayer. Tell God where you feel most disconnected. Thank Him that He still comes walking and calling, "Where are you?", and ask Him to close the distance.

Day 3 | Broken Cisterns

Read: Jeremiah 2:13 and Genesis 4:1–12

Focus: "They have forsaken me, the spring of living water." (Jeremiah 2:13)

Centuries later, the prophet Jeremiah described life after the Fall with one image. God's people, he said, committed two sins. They abandoned Him, the spring of living water, and then dug their own cisterns, cracked containers that can't hold water. We walked away from the source, and ever since we've been trying to satisfy our thirst for God with everything except God.

We still want to worship. We aim that desire at the wrong things: money, approval, romance, achievement, comfort, and control. Each cistern promises to satisfy, and each one leaks dry. If you always feel almost full but never quite full, you are drinking from a cracked cistern.

The damage doesn't stay personal. In Genesis 4, the very next chapter, a brother murders his brother. From there come wars and rivalries, cruelty and collapse, as the disconnection spreads through families, nations, and history. Sin was never only an individual problem. Once the connection to God was cut, everything began to come apart.

The diagnosis is bleak, and it also makes things clear. If you're worn out from hauling water from cisterns that won't hold it, a better cistern won't help you. You need the Spring.

Journal. What broken cisterns have you gone to, hoping to satisfy a thirst only God can satisfy? How well have they held?

Prayer. Confess to God the cisterns you've been drinking from. Ask Him, the spring of living water, to satisfy the thirst you've been trying to fill everywhere else.

Day 4 | A World That Fell Too

Read: Romans 8:18–22

Focus: "The whole creation has been groaning." (Romans 8:22)

We sometimes think of the Fall as a purely human, purely spiritual event, a stain on the soul. Scripture says much more. Paul tells the Romans that "against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse." The world we were put in charge of fell with us. Creation itself, he says, groans like a woman in labor, longing to be set free.

This is why the world feels the way it does. The planet that "declares the glory of God" also shakes with earthquakes and floods. Bodies that are "fearfully and wonderfully made" break down, get sick, and grow old. Mental anguish, confused identities, and relationships that should be safe but aren't are all part of the groaning of a creation cut off from its source of life. When Adam and Eve were disconnected from God, the whole world they were caring for lost power.

If you've ever looked at the suffering in the world or in your own life and thought, this isn't how it's supposed to be, you're right. That thought isn't naive. It's a memory of Eden. The groaning you feel is creation's groaning, and Paul calls it labor. Something is being born out of all this pain, even though we haven't seen it yet.

Journal. Where have you felt most strongly that "this is not how it's supposed to be"? What does that instinct tell you about what you were made for?

Prayer. Bring God a place where you see the world groaning, in your life or beyond it. Ask Him to help you grieve it honestly, and to hold on to the hope that this groaning is labor and not the end.

Day 5 | A Way Back

Read: Genesis 3:15, 21–24

Focus: "He will crush your head." (Genesis 3:15)

Before we leave the Fall, look at two signs of hope God places in the darkness. They change how you read the rest of the Bible.

The first is a promise spoken to the serpent: one day a descendant of the woman will crush the serpent's head, though He will be wounded doing it. "He will crush your head, but you will strike his heel." The earliest readers heard this as the first announcement of a Rescuer who would take the wound Himself in order to undo the damage. The chapter that records the disaster also plants the seed of its reversal.

The second sign is easy to misread. God places cherubim with a flaming sword at the entrance to Eden to guard the way to the tree of life. It is exile. Look closer, though. They guard the way, keeping the path to the tree of life protected until the promised descendant comes. God did not seal the way back. He guarded it.

We live "east of Eden" now, outside the garden, in a broken world, with the ache of disconnection in our bones. The way home was never destroyed, and God made the promise of a Rescuer on the same day everything fell apart. Next week we'll look at how the Fall shows up in your own story, and the week after, we'll meet the One the promise was about.

Journal. How does it change the way you carry your own brokenness to know that on the day everything fell apart, God already promised a way back?

Prayer. Thank God that He placed hope in the worst moment of the story. Ask Him to bring that hope into the broken places of your life, with the promise that there is a way back.

Discussion Guide | Week Three

Connect

What's a favorite plot twist from a movie or book, a moment the story turned and you never saw it coming? How did it change everything after it?

Into the Story

This week we looked at the plot twist in God's story: the Fall. The serpent led Adam and Eve to doubt God's goodness, and their disobedience cut humanity off from God. The result was disconnection from God, from one another, and even from creation. God also planted two signs of hope: the promise of a coming Rescuer (Genesis 3:15) and a guarded path back to the tree of life.

Into the Word

- 1.The serpent didn't argue that God doesn't exist. He made Eve doubt that God is good, that God was holding out on her. Why do you think that works so well? Where do you hear your own version of "Did God really say...?" Where are you tempted to believe God is keeping something good from you?
- 2.After they sin, Adam and Eve hide, and then they blame. Where do you still see those two reactions in people today, including in yourself?
- 3.The teaching used one word to sum up the Fall: disconnection. Where do you feel most disconnected right now: from God, from people, or from the life you long for?

Into Your Life

- 4.Jeremiah describes people walking away from "the spring of living water" to dig "broken cisterns" that can't hold water. What are some of the broken cisterns our culture tells us will satisfy? Which ones pull at you the most?
- 5.Romans 8 says all creation is "groaning," and describes it as labor pains that lead to new life. Where do you see or feel that groaning? How does it help to know that God promised a way back on the same day everything fell apart?

Respond

- Name one broken cistern you want to stop drinking from.
- Close in prayer. Ask God, the spring of living water, to meet each person in the places they feel disconnected, and thank Him that the way back was never sealed.

Looking ahead

Next week gets personal again: Your Turning Point, Recognizing the Impact of the Fall in Your Life.

Week Four

Your Turning Point: Recognizing the Impact of the Fall in Your Life

The big idea

Sin is more than the wrong things you do. It is a condition you have, the same condition every human being shares. When you see that, you stop pretending and you stop judging.

This week we get personal and honest. We'll look at how the disconnection of the Fall lives in your own story. You won't find a list of failures to feel guilty about here. You'll find a condition every person shares. The goal is a humility that sees clearly and frees you to receive grace and give it to others. And you'll see that God responds to broken people with compassion.

Day 1 | Sin Is a Noun

Read: Romans 7:18–25

Focus: "It is sin living in me that does it." (Romans 7:20)

A small point of grammar changes how we understand ourselves. We usually treat sin as a verb, something you do. Scripture treats it first as a noun, something you have. It is a condition.

Paul says it this way: "If I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it." For Paul, sin lives in us. It is a condition that produces actions the way a fever produces sweat. The actions are symptoms, and the condition is the disease.

Aging works the same way. We don't grow old because we did something wrong. We grow old because we are mortal people in a world that is wearing out. In the same way, we don't become sinners only because we sin. We are born disconnected from our source of life, and that condition shows up in what we do. A phone left unplugged doesn't decide to die. It just can't keep running.

This isn't meant to crush you. It's meant to free you from the exhausting work of trying to fix yourself by managing your behavior. Your real problem goes deeper than the things on your guilt list. It goes back to the connection that was cut in Eden, and better behavior can't restore that connection. Only God can reconnect you.

Journal. Have you thought of sin more as things you do or as a condition you have? How might seeing it as a condition change the way you relate to your own failures?

Prayer. Be honest with God about the patterns you can't seem to fix on your own. Ask Him to deal with the condition underneath them and not only the symptoms, and to reconnect you to the source of life.

Day 2 | Same Disease, Different Symptoms

Read: Romans 3:9–12, 22–24

Focus: "There is no difference... for all have sinned." (Romans 3:22–23)

If sin is a condition, then everyone has it. That truth is uncomfortable, and it also sets us free.

"There is no difference," Paul writes, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He means all people, and not only the ones who are obviously broken.

The Bible uses several words for the symptoms. Transgression means crossing God's boundaries. Trespass means crossing someone else's. Wickedness comes from a root that means bent or twisted, like the reeds in wicker furniture, and it describes a life bent the wrong way. All of us have transgressed and trespassed, and all of us are bent in places.

Picture a hospital ward full of cancer patients. Some have lost their hair. Some have aching joints. Some look perfectly healthy except for a deep exhaustion. Now imagine one patient refusing to sit near another because she doesn't want to catch cancer. It would be absurd. They all have the same disease with different symptoms.

We do exactly that with sin. We rank each other by which symptoms show, and we look down on the addict, the angry person, or the one whose failures are public, while we carry the same condition in quieter forms. Seeing this clearly humbles us in a good way. It puts you on the same ward as everyone else, no higher and no lower, needing the same cure.

Journal. Whose symptoms of sin do you tend to look down on? What happens in you when you realize you carry the same condition, just in a different form?

Prayer. Ask God to show you where you've ranked yourself above others because of their visible failures. Thank Him that His cure is the same for everyone, and ask Him for it.

Day 3 | He Took Up Our Infirmities

Read: Matthew 8:14–17

Focus: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." (Matthew 8:17)

One word for sin rarely gets talked about: infirmity. It's where we get the word infirmary. It means weakness, whether physical, moral, or spiritual, the inability to be what you were made to be. When humanity was cut off from its source of life, it became infirm in a real sense, weakened and unable on its own to be fully human.

How does God respond to weakness? Matthew tells us Jesus healed the sick to fulfill Isaiah's words: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." When God meets human frailty, whether it's addiction, mental anguish, patterns we can't break, or the brokenness beneath our behavior, He responds with compassion. He moves toward it and carries it.

That changes how you can treat your own weakness. Many of us hide our struggles because we assume God will react the way we fear people will, with judgment and distance. The Jesus of the Gospels walks straight into rooms full of sick people. He touches people others won't touch, and He carries what we can't.

If there's a weakness in you that you've been managing in secret, ashamed and alone, Jesus moves toward that exact place. You don't have to get strong before you bring it to Him. He took up our infirmities, and He can take up yours.

Journal. What weakness or struggle have you been carrying in secret because you're afraid of being judged? What would it mean to bring it to a God who responds with compassion?

Prayer. Bring God the weakness you've kept hidden. Thank Him that He moves toward weakness, and let Him carry what you've been carrying alone.

Day 4 | The Plank in My Own Eye

Read: Matthew 7:1–5

Focus: "First take the plank out of your own eye." (Matthew 7:5)

If we all have the same condition, judging each other makes no sense. Jesus makes the point with sharp humor: why do you point at the speck of sawdust in someone else's eye while you ignore the plank in your own?

We see other people's flaws clearly and miss our own. Usually we don't think we're sinless. We grade on a curve and rank our respectable symptoms above someone else's messy ones. You can't diagnose another patient while you deny that you're on the ward yourself.

Jesus does not say sin doesn't matter, and He doesn't say we should never speak truth to each other. He says to deal with yourself first. "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Humility doesn't make you blind to other people's brokenness. It makes you gentle and useful as you help them, one patient pointing another toward the cure.

When you understand that you share the same condition as everyone else, judging others loses its appeal. You become able to love people honestly, as they are, and the world is hungry for that kind of love.

Journal. Where have you focused on someone else's speck more than your own plank? What would change if you dealt with yourself first?

Prayer. Ask God to show you the plank you've been ignoring. Ask Him for the humility to deal with your own heart first, and the compassion to love others as a fellow patient.

Day 5 | Born Again

Read: Psalm 51:1–12 and John 3:1–8

Focus: "You must be born again." (John 3:7)

If sin is a condition we're born with, self-improvement can't reach the root of it. King David knew this. In his most honest prayer he confessed, "I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." He wasn't saying babies are wicked. He was saying the condition was there before he did anything. Then he asked for the only real solution: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Create is the same word used in Genesis 1. David needed a new beginning he couldn't produce himself.

Centuries later, a respected religious leader named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, and Jesus told him the same thing in different words: "No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." Jesus didn't offer him reform or improvement. He offered a second birth that does what the first birth couldn't, reconnecting us to the God we were cut off from.

The whole story turns on this. You can't fix a terminal condition with more effort. You need new life, and God is the One who gives it. You couldn't knit yourself together in the womb, and you can't give yourself a second birth. Both are gifts.

We've spent two weeks feeling the weight of brokenness. Next week the sun comes up. We turn to Redemption and meet the One who makes new birth possible.

Journal. David asked God to create a clean heart in him, something only God can do. Where are you trying to fix through effort what only God can make new?

Prayer. Pray David's prayer in your own words. Ask God to create in you a clean heart and a fresh start, and thank Him that new life is His gift to give.

Discussion Guide | Week Four

Connect

Think of a time you tried to fix something by willpower alone, a habit, a mood, or a pattern, and it didn't work. What happened?

Into the Story

This week got personal and honest. We learned that sin is first a noun, a condition we have, and then a verb, the things we do. Everyone shares the condition, even though the symptoms are different. We saw that God responds to human weakness with compassion, that it makes no sense to judge others when we have the same disease, and that the only real cure is to be born again, a new life only God can give.

Into the Word

1. This week described sin as a condition we have, not only as things we do. Does that make sin feel heavier or lighter to you? Why? How might it change the way you think about your own failures?
2. The teaching used the picture of a cancer ward, where everyone has the same disease with different symptoms. Yet we still rank each other by which sins are easiest to see. Where do you see people or churches doing that? Where do you catch yourself doing it?
3. Scripture says Jesus "took up our infirmities." God responds to human weakness by moving toward it with compassion. How does that compare to what you assume God feels about your weakest places? What would change if you believed He meets them with compassion?

Into Your Life

4. Jesus talked about the "plank" in our own eye and the "speck" in someone else's. Where has it been easier for you to see other people's flaws than your own? What would dealing with your own plank first actually look like?
5. David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart," asking God to do what he couldn't do himself. What are you trying to fix through effort that only God can make new?

Respond

- Share one weakness you're willing to stop hiding and start bringing to God.
- Close in prayer. Ask God for the humility to admit the condition we all share, and the courage to receive the new life only He can give.

Looking ahead

The hardest weeks are behind us. Next week the sun comes up as we turn to Redemption: The Rescue Plan.

Part Three: Redemption

Weeks 5 and 6

Every great story has a turning point, when the hero arrives, the rescue begins, and the tide turns. After the beauty of Creation and the brokenness of the Fall comes the best news in the world. God did not leave us east of Eden. He came after us.

- **Week 5, God's Story:** the rescue plan God set in motion from the beginning, fulfilled in Jesus.
- **Week 6, Your Story:** how your own redemption becomes something you can carry with you and share, more simply than you might think.

The promise God made in the wreckage of Eden is about to be given a name.

Week Five

The Rescue Plan: God's Redemption Story

The big idea

From the moment everything fell apart, God set out to buy back what was lost. His rescue has a name, Jesus, and it reaches all the way into the brokenness you know best.

Have you ever felt like you're not enough? Not successful enough, not good enough, not far enough along? Most of us know that heavy feeling well, and this week answers it. We'll follow God's rescue plan from the Exodus to Isaiah's suffering servant to a manger in Bethlehem, and we'll see that being enough was never about what you do. It is about what has already been done for you. This is the week the hero arrives.

Day 1 | A God on a Rescue Mission

Read: Exodus 3:7–10

Focus: "I have come down to rescue them." (Exodus 3:8)

Long before Bethlehem, God showed what kind of God He is. Speaking to Moses from a burning bush, He says of His enslaved people, "I have seen the misery of my people... I have heard them crying out... I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them."

Look at the verbs: seen, heard, concerned, come down. God does not watch suffering from a comfortable distance. He notices, He is moved, and He comes down into the mess to do something about it. That rhythm runs through the whole Old Testament. God raises up rescuers, leads His people out of slavery, and refuses to abandon them however far they wander.

Redemption is a word from the marketplace. To redeem something is to buy it back, to pay the price to recover what was lost or enslaved. From the beginning, God has been buying back His disconnected children at a cost to Himself.

Whatever has you feeling enslaved this week, whether it's a habit, a fear, or a story you can't escape, start here. God is not indifferent to it. He sees, He hears, and He cares. He has a long history of coming down to rescue the people He loves, and the burning bush was a preview of what He would do.

Journal. What feels like slavery in your life right now, something you long to be rescued from? What would it mean to believe God has seen it and come down for it?

Prayer. Tell God plainly what you long to be rescued from. Thank Him that He sees, hears, and comes down, and ask Him to come down into that very place.

Day 2 | The Suffering Servant

Read: Isaiah 53:1–6

Focus: "By his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah described a mysterious figure, a suffering servant, in language so specific it reads like an eyewitness account of the cross. He would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace would fall on him, and by his wounds we would be healed.

Pay attention to how the rescue works. We might expect God to fix the world by force, overpowering evil and crushing the serpent. The Rescuer comes to absorb the damage instead. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." He takes the weight of our wandering onto Himself.

Redemption cost the Redeemer everything. The price of buying us back was suffering He chose to carry in our place.

If you've ever wondered whether God really understands your pain, Isaiah answers with His wounds. He didn't heal us from a distance. He stepped into our brokenness, took the blow meant for us, and carried it on His own body. The God who heals you walked straight into suffering for you.

Journal. "By his wounds we are healed." What wound in you most needs healing? How does it change things to know the Healer was willing to be wounded for you?

Prayer. Bring your deepest wound to the One who was wounded for you. Thank Jesus that He came close to rescue you and took the weight of your brokenness on Himself.

Day 3 | The Word Became Flesh

Read: John 1:1–14

Focus: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14)

Read the beginning of John slowly and you'll hear Genesis: "In the beginning..." John opens his Gospel with the same words because he is announcing a new beginning. The eternal Word who spoke creation into being has stepped into creation. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

This is the central claim of the Christian faith. Jesus is more than a great teacher or a holy man. He is God in a human body. He was "with God" and "was God" before time began, and He

came wrapped in flesh, walking dusty roads, eating meals, and weeping at a friend's grave. The transcendent God of Genesis 1 became the God in the manger, close enough to touch.

He came to rescue. A few verses later John calls Him "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." God's rescue mission had an address and a face.

This brings deep comfort. The God you pray to knows human life from the inside. He knows hunger and exhaustion, betrayal and grief, the ache of a long day, and the sting of being misunderstood. When you bring Him your life, you bring it to Someone who has lived one. No part of your human experience is beneath Him, because He has been here.

Journal. What part of your everyday life, its struggles, its ordinary moments, or its pain, do you forget God understands from the inside?

Prayer. Thank Jesus that He became flesh and lived a human life. Bring Him one ordinary or painful part of your day, and talk with Him as Someone who understands.

Day 4 | The Lamb Who Seeks the Lost

Read: Luke 19:1–10

Focus: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)

Jesus is passing through Jericho when He sees Zacchaeus up in a tree. Zacchaeus is a tax collector, a traitor, and a cheat, the kind of man respectable people crossed the street to avoid. Of all the homes in town, Jesus invites Himself to his. The crowd is scandalized, and Jesus is delighted. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Zacchaeus doesn't clean up his life and then earn time with Jesus. Jesus seeks him out in his mess and his shame, up in a tree, and the change comes after the welcome. By the end of the day, Zacchaeus is giving away half of what he owns and paying back everyone he cheated. Grace came first, and change followed.

This is who the Lamb of God is: a Good Shepherd who searches the hills for the lost sheep until He finds it. He came for the lost, and that is good news, because it describes all of us.

If part of you believes you have to become respectable before God will want you, Zacchaeus's story is yours. Jesus is already looking up into your tree, calling your name, and inviting Himself in. He came to seek, and He finds the people He is looking for.

Journal. Does part of you believe you have to clean up before God will welcome you? How does Zacchaeus's story challenge that?

Prayer. Picture Jesus looking up, calling your name, and wanting to come in before you've fixed anything. Thank Him that He came to seek you, and let Him in as you are.

Day 5 | Dead, Then Alive

Read: Ephesians 2:1–10

Focus: "But because of his great love for us, God... made us alive with Christ." (Ephesians 2:4–5)

Paul doesn't soften the diagnosis. Before Christ, he says, we were dead in our transgressions. We were not sick or struggling or behind on our spiritual goals. We were dead. Then comes one of the most beautiful turns in Scripture, and it rests on two small words: "But God." "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead... it is by grace you have been saved."

This is the heart of redemption. God reached down and raised the dead. Nobody brings themselves back to life. New life is something God does for you, out of pure mercy, "not by works, so that no one can boast." At the start of this week we named the heavy feeling of not being enough, and this is where you can finally set it down. You were never going to be enough on your own, and you don't have to be. Grace did what effort never could.

We are rescued from both things we looked at in the Fall. We are rescued from the consequences of sin, because we're forgiven, and from the condition of sin, because we're made alive and reconnected to our source of life. The connection cut in Eden is restored.

This is the turning point of your story, where being enough stops depending on your performance and rests on His grace. If you've trusted Jesus, you already have new life. Next week we'll look at how to carry this good news to someone else.

Journal. Where are you still trying to earn what Paul calls a gift? What would it feel like to receive grace instead of striving for it?

Prayer. Thank God for the "but God" in your story, that He made you alive when you couldn't do it yourself. Lay down one thing you've been trying to earn, and receive His grace as a gift.

Discussion Guide | Week Five

Connect

Tell us about a time someone rescued you, big or small. What was it like to receive help you couldn't give yourself?

Into the Story

This week we turned to Redemption. We saw that God has always been a rescuer ("I have come down," Exodus 3). Isaiah's suffering servant pointed to the rescue, and it was fulfilled when "the Word became flesh" in Jesus. We watched Jesus seek and save the lost in Zacchaeus, and we came to the heart of the gospel: we were spiritually dead, "but God... made us alive" by grace, and not by anything we earned.

Into the Word

- 1.The teaching opened with a question: Have you ever felt like you're just not enough? Where does that feeling show up for you? What does grace say to it?
- 2.At the burning bush, God says, "I have seen... I have heard... I have come down to rescue." What does it mean to you that God comes down into suffering instead of watching it from a distance?
- 3.Isaiah 53 says the Rescuer would take our brokenness on Himself ("by his wounds we are healed") instead of overpowering it by force. Why does it matter that our redemption cost God something? How does that affect the way you see your own suffering?

Into Your Life

- 4.In Luke 19, Jesus goes to Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus changes anything. Grace comes first, and change follows. How does that challenge the idea that we have to clean ourselves up before we come to God?
- 5.Ephesians 2 turns on two words: "But God." We were dead, "but God... made us alive." Where do you most need a "but God" in your story right now? Are you more likely to try to earn God's acceptance or to receive it? Why?

Respond

- Share one place where you want to stop striving and start receiving grace.
- Close in prayer. Thank God that He came down, sought us out, and made us alive when we couldn't do it ourselves.

Looking ahead

Next week we make it personal and portable: The Redemption Story, Making It Easy to Share. Come ready to discover that you already have what you need to share your faith.

Week Six

The Redemption Story: Making It Portable and Easy to Share

The big idea

You already have what you need to change the world, with no platform, budget, or influence required. The first Christians turned the world upside down with two stories, God's story and their own. God gave us two simple, physical pictures, communion and baptism, that make those stories easy to tell.

The redemption you've received is meant to be shared. This week we'll look at the two tools the early church used to spread the gospel, and we'll see how communion and baptism tell God's whole story with bread, a cup, and water. You can share that story with anyone.

Day 1 | Two Stories That Changed the World

Read: Revelation 12:10–11

Focus: "They triumphed... by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." (Revelation 12:11)

How did 120 frightened people in an upstairs room become a movement that reshaped the Western world within a few centuries? They had no money, no platform, and no marketing budget, and many of them lost everything they had. Revelation 12:11 answers in one sentence: they overcame "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."

They had two stories.

The first is "the blood of the Lamb," God's story: a Creator who made us, watched us fall, and came to redeem us at the cost of His own Son. The second is "the word of their testimony," your story: what God has done in your actual life.

We tend to think we need more before we can make a difference: more followers, more confidence, more theological training, more resources. So we wait, and we assume changing the world is for experts and influencers. The early church shows otherwise. They didn't have printed Bibles or a social media following. They knew two stories and refused to keep quiet about them.

You already have both stories. You know God's story, because you've been reading it for five weeks. You have your own story too, and no one else on earth can tell it. You aren't missing anything you need.

Journal. What do you think you're missing before you could make a spiritual difference in someone's life? What if you already have what you need?

Prayer. Thank God that He has given you both stories, His and yours. Ask Him to free you from the lie that you need more before He can use you, and to give you the courage to speak.

Day 2 | The Story in the Bread and the Cup

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Focus: "Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24)

Most of us think of communion as a quiet, serious ritual, a moment to feel clean. The cleansing happened once, two thousand years ago, outside the gates of Jerusalem. Communion is where we tell that story.

Jesus started the Lord's Supper during Passover, a meal where God's people retold how He rescued them from slavery, brought them through the sea, and made them a new nation. Jesus took that meal and used it to tell a new story. God has rescued us from slavery to sin through the death of His Son, leads us through the waters of baptism, and forms us into one new people from every nation.

The bread is His body, because God became one of us. The cup is His blood, poured out to forgive us. Jesus didn't tell His followers only to look at the bread and cup and remember. He told them to eat and drink. He wants to be as close to you as food and drink are to your body, taken in, becoming part of you, and strengthening you from the inside to be His hands and feet in the world.

The next time you hold the bread and the cup, you are holding the whole gospel in your hands, and you can tell it to anyone: God made us, we walked away, He came to bring us back, and He wants to be that close to you.

Journal. How would your experience of communion change if you saw it as telling the story of God's rescue?

Prayer. Thank Jesus that He wants to be as close to you as food and drink. Ask Him to make the gospel so real to you that you could explain it simply to someone else.

Day 3 | Buried and Raised

Read: Romans 6:1–11

Focus: "We too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4)

Communion tells God's story in a meal, and baptism tells it in water. Paul explains what happens beneath the surface: "We were buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead... we too may live a new life."

Baptism acts out a burial and a resurrection. Going under the water is a funeral. The old self, the life ruled by sin, is put to death and buried. Coming up out of the water is a resurrection into the new life God intended from the beginning. Baptism declares that the old me is dead and I have been raised to live differently.

Going under the water doesn't accomplish this by itself. In Ephesians 2, you were dead and God made you alive. Baptism announces and acts out the new life God has already given. You don't drown your old self through willpower. You let yourself be buried with Christ and raised with Him.

If you've been baptized, today is a good day to remember what your baptism declared: your old self is in the grave, and the person who came up out of the water is the new you, reconnected to God. If you haven't been baptized yet, it's worth a conversation with your group leader or a pastor.

Journal. What old self or old identity do you most need to remember has been buried? What does it mean to you that you've been raised to "live a new life"?

Prayer. Thank God that in Christ your old self is buried and you've been raised to new life. Name one way you want to live out that new identity this week, and ask for His help.

Day 4 | Your Baptism Tells the Whole Story

Read: Colossians 2:11–14

Focus: "Raised with him through your faith." (Colossians 2:12)

Your baptism tells all four parts of God's story at once. The whole gospel is acted out in a single moment, which makes baptism one of the simplest ways to share your faith.

The person standing in the water was created, like everyone, for a relationship with God, made in His image to walk with their Maker. Going under the water pictures the Fall: the burial of the old life and the death that disconnection brings. Rising out of the water pictures Redemption: Jesus's victory over death becomes theirs, the old identity dead and a new life raised. And the person who walks out of the water, dripping and reborn, is a preview of Restoration, the day God makes all things and all people new.

Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration are preached every time someone is baptized. You don't need a seminary degree to explain it. You could share the whole gospel with a friend by walking them through what baptism means.

God designed the faith to spread through simple, physical pictures that anyone can understand and anyone can share. You already know the story, and now you have a way to tell it in a sentence and a splash of water.

Journal. Could you explain the gospel to a friend using baptism: created, fallen, redeemed, and being restored? Try writing it out in a few simple sentences.

Prayer. Ask God to make the gospel clear enough in your mind that you could share it with someone this week. Pray for one person who needs to hear it.

Day 5 | You Already Have What It Takes

Read: Acts 1:6–8

Focus: "You will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8)

Just before Jesus returned to heaven, His followers were still hoping for something dramatic, a political kingdom or a show of force. Jesus gave them a job and a promise instead: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses," starting where they were and reaching to the ends of the earth.

Jesus chose the word witnesses. A witness doesn't have to be an expert or a lawyer. A witness tells what they've seen. You don't have to argue anyone into the kingdom or have every answer. You have to tell the truth about what God has done, in His story and in yours.

The assignment comes with power, and the power comes from the Holy Spirit. The God who spoke creation into being, came down to rescue, and raised the dead gives ordinary people the power to carry His story forward. The 120 people in that upstairs room weren't impressive, but filled with the Spirit they turned the world upside down with the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

You have God's story, your own story, simple pictures to tell them with, and the Spirit's power to do it. The redemption you received is meant to reach other people through you. Next week we'll look ahead to where the whole story is going, Restoration, and the week after that we'll put your story into words you can share.

Journal. Who in your life might God be inviting you to be a witness to, someone you could simply tell what God has done? What holds you back?

Prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit for the power Jesus promised, so you can be a faithful witness. Name one person, and ask God for the courage and the opportunity to share your story with them.

Discussion Guide | Week Six

Connect

What's something you've found yourself recommending to everyone, a show, a restaurant, or a product, because you genuinely loved it? Why was it so easy to talk about?

Into the Story

This week we saw that the early church changed the world with two stories: the blood of the Lamb, God's story, and the word of their testimony, their own story (Revelation 12:11). We saw that communion and baptism tell the gospel with bread, a cup, and water. Baptism alone tells all four parts of God's story, Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, which makes it one of the simplest ways to share our faith.

Into the Word

1. The early church had no money, no platform, and no printed Bibles, yet changed the world with two stories: "the blood of the Lamb" (God's story) and "the word of their testimony" (their own). What do we tend to think we need before we can make a spiritual difference? What if we already have what's required?
2. We often treat communion as a private moment of cleansing. How does it change things to see it as telling the story of redemption: God made us, we walked away, and He came to bring us back?
3. Baptism pictures being buried and raised with Christ. The old self dies, and a new life is raised. What part of your old self needs to stay buried? If you've been baptized, what did it declare over your life?

Into Your Life

4. Walk through how baptism tells all four parts of God's story: created, fallen, redeemed, and being restored. Could you explain the gospel to a friend just by explaining baptism? Try it out loud together.
5. Jesus calls us witnesses, people who tell what they've seen. Witnesses don't need every answer. What makes it hard for you to talk about your faith? What would make it easier?

Respond

- Each person: name one person you'll begin praying for to hear the gospel.
- Close in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit for power to be witnesses, and thank God that we already have what we need.

Looking ahead

Next week we look toward the end of the story: All Things New, God's Promise of Restoration.

Part Four: Restoration

Weeks 7 and 8

Every good story is headed somewhere. After the rescue comes renewal: the promise that brokenness will not have the last word, that what was lost will be restored, and that the best is still to come.

- **Week 7, God's Story:** God's promise to make all things new, in this world and the next.
- **Week 8, Your Story:** how your restored life becomes a story worth telling, and how to tell it.

The whole study has been leading here. Let's finish well.

Week Seven

All Things New: God's Promise of Restoration

The big idea

God is making all things new. He is reversing the Fall, healing what was shattered, and restoring what was lost. He doesn't hide the cracks. He fills them with gold.

We've walked through Creation, the Fall, and Redemption. Now we look at where the story is going, the fourth and final part. Restoration is about more than going to heaven someday. It is about heaven and earth coming back together, bodies being healed, losses being restored, and the whole creation flourishing the way God designed it. This hope is what lets us face anything.

Day 1 | Mended in Gold

Read: Acts 3:19–21

Focus: "He must remain in heaven until the time... for the final restoration of all things." (Acts 3:21)

There is an old Japanese art called kintsugi, the repair of broken pottery with gold. The artist doesn't hide the cracks. Gold runs through every line where the bowl broke, and the mended bowl becomes more beautiful and more valuable than it was before.

God restores people this way. When life shatters someone through loss, failure, illness, or grief, God doesn't throw away the pieces or pretend the damage never happened. He gathers them, mends them with His grace, and turns the broken places into something beautiful. The scars become part of the story.

Peter, preaching in the temple, pointed to a day he called "the final restoration of all things." The Greek word is apokatastasis, a complete restoration that puts right everything that went wrong. The world won't simply be reset as if the Fall never happened. It will be restored, and like a kintsugi bowl, it may be more glorious for having been broken and healed.

If you're carrying cracks today, don't despise them. In God's hands, they may become the very places where the gold goes.

Journal. Where are the cracks in your story, the broken places you'd rather hide? Can you picture God running gold through them?

Prayer. Offer God the broken places you usually hide. Ask Him to mend them with gold and make them part of the beauty, in His time and His way.

Day 2 | All Things New

Read: Revelation 21:1–5

Focus: "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5)

The way the Bible's story ends tells you where yours is going. John sees a new heaven and a new earth, and he hears a voice from the throne: "God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them... He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This is the reversal of the Fall. The Fall separated God and humanity and cut the world off from its source of life. Here God and His people are together again: "God's dwelling place is now among the people." The closeness of Eden, lost in Genesis 3, is restored, this time in a whole renewed creation where God lives with His people face to face.

Look at what God does with tears. He doesn't only end suffering. He wipes the tears from each face Himself, the way a father would. Every grief you have carried and every loss you have wept over will be met by the careful hand of God.

"I am making everything new." God doesn't throw creation away and start over. He makes this world, these bodies, and you new. Whatever is broken in your life right now is headed for renewal. Hold on to that this week. The last word of the story is new.

Journal. What tears are you hoping God will one day wipe away? How does it help to know He will do it Himself?

Prayer. Tell God the grief you most long to see healed. Thank Him that He promises to wipe every tear Himself, and that His last word over your life is "new."

Day 3 | The Tree of Life, Again

Read: Revelation 22:1–5

Focus: "No longer will there be any curse." (Revelation 22:3)

At the end of Week Three, God placed cherubim at the entrance to Eden to guard the way to the tree of life until the Rescuer came. On the last pages of the Bible, the tree of life appears again. It is no longer guarded. It grows on both banks of a crystal-clear river, bears fruit every month, and its leaves are "for the healing of the nations."

The story comes full circle. What was lost in Genesis is restored in Revelation, and it is greater than before. Eden was a garden. The new creation is a garden city full of people from every nation. Then comes the line that lets you breathe out: "No longer will there be any curse." The thorns, the hard labor, the disconnection, and death, everything the Fall set loose, is undone.

God's story ends better than it began. The Fall and the cost of Redemption aren't erased. They are woven into a restoration more beautiful than the original, and the serpent's plot twist becomes a small detail in a story that ends with the curse lifted and the tree of life open to everyone.

Whatever curse you feel hanging over part of your life, a pattern that won't break or a hurt that won't heal, keep this ending in view. God's story is moving toward "no longer will there be any curse," and so is yours.

Journal. What curse in your life do you long to see lifted? How does it change your hope to know the story ends with the curse undone and the tree of life open?

Prayer. Name the thing that feels like a curse over your life. Thank God that His story is moving toward "no longer will there be any curse," and ask Him for patience and hope as you wait for that day.

Day 4 | Three Redos

Read: Joel 2:25–27 and Matthew 19:27–29

Focus: "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten." (Joel 2:25)

Restoration isn't only about the world being renewed. It is deeply personal, and Scripture promises at least three redos. We'll look at two today and the third tomorrow.

The first is a redo on our losses. God says through Joel, "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten." Think about what this broken world has taken: missed opportunities, broken relationships, stolen experiences, and years swallowed by hardship. God promises more than comfort for those losses. He promises to restore them and to give back so much that the ache of what was lost is gone. The locust years will be repaid.

The second is a redo on our calling. God first gave humanity the job of ruling over creation as His stewards (Genesis 1). We lost that in the Fall. Jesus promises that "at the renewal of all things," those who have followed Him will reign with Him. The calling we were made for, meaningful work, real responsibility, and partnership with God in caring for His world, will be given back.

This is why Christian hope is different from wishful thinking or going to a better place. It is restoration. C.S. Lewis wrote that if we find in ourselves a desire nothing in this world can satisfy, the most likely explanation is that we were made for another world. The ache you feel for what you've lost, or never got to have, remembers Eden and looks ahead to what is coming. You were made for the day God restores everything.

Journal. What locust years or losses do you most long to see God restore? What would it mean to trust Him to repay them?

Prayer. Bring God the losses you grieve most: the years, the relationships, and the chances you feel you'll never get back. Ask Him to be the God who repays the locust years, and to give you hope for the redo that is coming.

Day 5 | Your Body Gets a Redo

Read: Romans 8:18–25 and 1 Corinthians 15:42–44

Focus: "The redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:23)

The third redo is the most physical: your body. If you live with illness, disability, chronic pain, or the slow wear of aging, or you love someone who does, this promise is for you. Paul says all creation groans, and "we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly... for the redemption of our bodies." Restoration doesn't mean escaping your body into a ghostly afterlife. It means receiving your body back, renewed and glorious, free of every limit the Fall placed on it.

Paul gives a whole chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, to this promise. What is sown perishable will be raised imperishable. What is sown in weakness will be raised in power. The proof is Jesus. His resurrection was the preview. He rose with a real body that could eat a meal and be touched, free of its old limits, and His resurrection is the first of many for everyone who belongs to Him.

This hope carried the early Christians through persecution and even death. They could face the worst the world could do to their bodies because they knew the story didn't end there. "When Christ appears," John writes, "we shall be like him."

We've now traced God's whole story, Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, and seen that your story follows the same shape. You were made in His image, damaged by the Fall, remade through Redemption, and headed for Restoration. Next week, the final week, we'll bring it all together: how to know your own story and share it with people who need to hear that their lives can follow the same pattern.

Journal. What limitation in your body, your health, or your aging do you most look forward to God redeeming? How does Jesus's resurrection give you hope for it?

Prayer. Bring God the physical struggle you or someone you love is carrying. Thank Him that Jesus's resurrection is a preview of your own, and ask Him to fill you with the hope that "we shall be like him."

Discussion Guide | Week Seven

Connect

If you could have one thing in your life restored, a relationship, an ability, a season, or a place, what would it be, and why?

Into the Story

This week we looked at the end of God's story: Restoration. Like the art of kintsugi, God doesn't hide our cracks. He mends them with gold. He promises to make "everything new" (Revelation 21), reopening the tree of life and lifting the curse (Revelation 22). Restoration is also personal. God promises redos on our losses (Joel 2:25), on our calling to reign with Him, and even on our bodies (Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 15), and Jesus's resurrection is the preview.

Into the Word

1. Kintsugi fills the cracks with gold instead of hiding them. How does that compare to the way we usually handle our broken places? What would it look like to let God use your scars as part of your story?
2. Revelation 21 describes God living with His people and wiping every tear from their eyes. How is this scene the reversal of the Fall? Which detail means the most to you: His presence, the tears wiped away, or "everything new"?
3. Revelation 22 reopens the tree of life, guarded since Eden, and says there will "no longer" be "any curse." What curse, in your life or in the world, do you most want to see lifted?

Into Your Life

4. Joel 2:25 promises God will "repay the years the locusts have eaten." How does it feel to think God might actually restore what you've lost, and not only comfort you in the loss?
5. C.S. Lewis wrote that if we find a desire in ourselves that nothing in this world can satisfy, it suggests we were made for another world. What do your deepest unmet longings point you toward? How does the hope of restoration change the way you face what's hard right now?

Respond

- Share one specific hope you're placing in God's promise to make all things new.
- Close in prayer. Thank God that His last word over our lives and our world is "new."

Looking ahead

Next week we finish: Revealing a Restored Life, Knowing Your Story. Come ready to put your own story into words.

Week Eight

Revealing a Restored Life: Knowing Your Story

The big idea

You are part of God's story. Your life follows the same four-part pattern, and the moment God became real to you is a story no one can argue with, no one else has, and the people around you need to hear.

This is the final week, and it sends you out. You've seen that your story has the same shape as God's: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. This week you'll learn how to tell it. You'll find the moment God became real to you, see why your story carries so much weight, and step into your calling to tell it and to join God's work of restoration.

Day 1 | Re-Creation

Read: Matthew 1:1 and Colossians 1:15–20

Focus: "He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead." (Colossians 1:18)

The word recreation literally means re-creation, a fresh start. When you take a real vacation, you come back renewed. That small experience echoes what God's story promises on a much larger scale.

Matthew built this into the first line of his Gospel. "This is the genealogy of Jesus," he writes, and the Greek word translated genealogy is genesis. He points us back to the beginning to show that in Jesus, a new creation has begun. Matthew even arranges Jesus's family tree into three sets of fourteen generations, six sevens, so that Jesus's arrival begins a seventh seven: a complete sabbath rest from the old creation and the dawn of a new one. Paul says it directly. Jesus is "the beginning and the firstborn," the start of a new genesis for the whole world.

The re-creation God is bringing to the whole world, He is already bringing to you. Your life in Christ is a small version of God's whole story, created, fallen, redeemed, and being restored, playing out in one person. You aren't watching God renew the world from the sidelines. You are part of the renewal, and the new creation has already begun in you.

As this final week begins, remember that you are not the same person who started these eight weeks. In Christ you have been re-created, and a re-created life is meant to be seen and shared.

Journal. Where have you experienced a fresh start in your own life? How is your story a small version of God's whole story?

Prayer. Thank God that in Christ you have been re-created, and that the renewal He is bringing to the whole world has already begun in you. Ask Him to help you live this week as a new creation.

Day 2 | A New Creation, Sent

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17–20

Focus: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Paul says it as plainly as it can be said: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" You are more than a slightly improved version of your old self. You are a new creation, and Paul goes on to say what that new creation is for.

God, he writes, "gave us the ministry of reconciliation" and made us "Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." The God of the universe makes His appeal to a hurting world through ordinary people He has made new, people like you. An ambassador represents the King and carries His message into the places He wants to reach.

God restores you, and now He restores others through you. Every time you choose love over fear, forgiveness over bitterness, or hope over despair, you give the world a preview of the restoration that's coming. Every time you tell someone what God has done, you give them a chance to discover their own four-part story.

The new creation that has begun in you is meant to reach the next person. As we move toward sharing your story this week, start with this: you are an ambassador of the King, and He is making His appeal through you.

Journal. What would change if you really believed you were "Christ's ambassador," that God wants to make His appeal through you? Where might He be sending you?

Prayer. Thank God for the privilege of being His ambassador. Ask Him to show you the people and places He wants to reach through you, and to help you represent Him well this week.

Day 3 | When God Became Real to You

Read: Acts 26:12–18

Focus: "I could not disobey the vision from heaven." (Acts 26:19)

When we hear the word testimony in church, we often think of the story of when someone became a Christian: they prayed a prayer, walked down an aisle, or got baptized. For many people, especially those who grew up in church, that moment isn't very dramatic. It may mean a lot to their mom, but it rarely moves a stranger.

A better question defines your story: When did God first become real to you?

Look at how Paul tells his story. Given the chance to testify before a king, he doesn't describe his religious upbringing or the day he was baptized. He tells about the road to Damascus: the blinding light, the voice, and the moment the risen Jesus became undeniably real to him. He comes back to that story again and again. For many of us, the moment God became real and the moment we officially became Christians are two different moments, and the storytellers in the Bible told the first one.

Your story is your answer to that question. Maybe God became real to you in a crisis, a quiet moment, an answered prayer, or a sense of His presence you couldn't explain. Maybe it has happened more than once. Take time today to find it, and remember the moment the God you had heard about became the God you knew. That moment is the heart of your story. Tomorrow we'll see why it carries so much power.

Journal. When did God first become real to you, not only as an idea you believed but as a presence you knew? Write out that moment in as much detail as you can remember.

Prayer. Ask God to bring to mind the moment, or moments, when He became real to you. Thank Him for showing up in your life, and ask Him to help you put that story into words.

Day 4 | The Power of Your Story

Read: John 9:24–25

Focus: "I was blind but now I see!" (John 9:25)

Jesus had just healed a man born blind, and the religious leaders were questioning him, trying to discredit the healing. They argued theology, demanded explanations, and tried to trap him. His answer is one of the most powerful sentences in the Gospels: "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

He didn't win a debate. He didn't have credentials or answers. He told what happened to him, and no one could argue with it. Your story carries the same kind of power, for three reasons.

No one can argue with it. People can debate the Bible, theology, and whether God exists. They can't argue with what happened to you. If you pause halfway through, they will often ask you to finish.

No one else has it. Your story is as unique as a snowflake. God did something in your life that He did for no one else in quite the same way, and your story gives Him glory that no other story can.

If you don't share it, no one will ever know. If you never tell what God has done in your life, that part of His glory goes unseen.

You don't need to be an expert, and you don't need every answer. You were blind, and now you see. No one can take that story from you or prove it wrong. Tomorrow we'll send you out to tell it.

Journal. Which of these truths about your story stands out most to you: that no one can argue with it, that no one else has it and it gives God unique glory, or that no one will know unless you share it? Why?

Prayer. Thank God for the story only you can tell. Ask Him for confidence that you don't need every answer, only the truth of what He has done in your life, and for the willingness to share it.

Day 5 | Go and Help Others Discover Theirs

Read: Matthew 28:16–20

Focus: "Surely I am with you always." (Matthew 28:20)

We've come to the end of these eight weeks, and Jesus ends His time with His followers by sending them. Standing on a mountain, the risen Jesus gave them their mission, and ours: "Go and make disciples of all nations... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The mission begins and ends with His presence. He sends us out, and He never sends us alone.

Over eight weeks you have discovered that your life follows the same four-part pattern as the greatest story ever told. You were created in God's image and carry His fingerprints. You have felt the Fall, the brokenness and disconnection we all share. You have been offered Redemption, the rescue Jesus came to bring. And you are being drawn toward Restoration, the day God makes all things new, including you.

God is working these four parts of the story through you as well as in you. Think of the people in your life: the coworker searching for purpose, the friend who feels broken beyond repair, the neighbor carrying a quiet grief. Each of them has the same four-part story you do, even if they don't know it yet. Your job isn't to fix them or win an argument. Your job is to share when God became real to you and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

Don't let these eight weeks be something you only experienced. Live them out. You have God's story and your own. You have the Spirit's power and Jesus's promise to be with you always. You are living out God's story. Now go and help others discover theirs.

Journal. Who in your life has a four-part story they don't recognize yet? What's one step you could take this week to share God's story and yours with one of them?

Prayer. Ask Jesus, who promised to be with you always, for the courage to go. Name one person and commit them to God, asking for an opportunity, the right words, and the boldness to tell what He has done.

Discussion Guide | Week Eight

Connect

Looking back over these eight weeks, what's one thing that shifted in you: a new way of seeing God, yourself, or your story?

Into the Story

In our final week we saw that you are part of God's story, and even an ambassador of it (2 Corinthians 5). Your life follows the same four-part pattern: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. Your testimony is your answer to one question, When did God become real to you? Your story carries weight because no one can argue with it, no one else has it, and no one will know it unless you share it.

Into the Word

1. This week says you're not only someone who has received God's story. You're part of it, even "Christ's ambassador," someone God makes His appeal through. Does that feel true of you? What would change if you really believed it?
2. When Paul stands before a king in Acts 26, he tells the story of when Jesus became real to him instead of listing his religious credentials. Why is that kind of story more powerful than a list of beliefs?
3. The man Jesus healed of blindness said, "I was blind but now I see," and nobody could argue with him. Why is personal experience so much harder to argue with than theology? How does that take the pressure off needing every answer?

Into Your Life

4. Pair-share: When did God first become real to you? Pair up and share your story, about five minutes each.
5. After you regather: What was it like to hear someone else's story? Who in your life needs to hear yours, and what's one step you'll take toward sharing it with them?

Respond

- Each person: name one person you're committing to pray for and look for a chance to share with.

- Consider taking the 7-day challenge together. Every day for a week, tell God you're willing to share your story or His with anyone He brings across your path, and watch what happens.
- Close in prayer. Send one another out as ambassadors and storytellers, and thank God that He is with us always.

A final word

You are living out God's story. Your story isn't over, and in many ways it's just beginning. The people around you need to hear it.

Now go and help others discover theirs.

Next Steps

Living It Out

You've reached the end of these eight weeks, and the title of the study tells you what comes next: this story is meant to be lived out. You've discovered that your life follows the same four-part pattern as God's story, and that you are part of that story, even an ambassador of it.

So what's your next step?

Here are three. You don't have to take all of them at once. Ask God which one He is inviting you into next.

Invite: Who's Your One?

This is the step we most hope you'll carry with you. Almost everyone in your life is living in one of these four parts of the story right now, and most of them have no idea there's a bigger story they belong to. You have what you need to change that: God's story and your own.

You don't have to be an expert, and you don't need every answer. You were blind, and now you see, and no one can argue with that story.

Before you close this book, name your one. Who is the person God is putting on your heart to pray for, invite to your group, and share your story with? Write their name down and start praying for them today. When the next round of Living Out God's Story begins, invite them to your table. There's always room.

Your one: _____

Lead: Take the Next Seat

Your next step may be helping lead a group. The early church grew through ordinary people who knew two stories and were willing to open their homes and their lives.

If at any point in these eight weeks you've thought, I could do this, pay attention to that. Hosting a group is simpler than you might think. Mostly it means creating a warm space and caring about the people in it. Leading mostly means asking good questions and being willing to share your own story first.

Talk to your group leader about what it would look like to host or lead a group next season. The table you sat at for these eight weeks exists because someone said yes to leading it, and you could do the same for the next group.

Serve: Join God's Work of Restoration

In Week Four, we saw that God responds to a broken world with compassion. In Weeks Seven and Eight, we saw that God restores the world through us as well as restoring us. Every act of compassion gives the world a preview of the day God makes all things new.

One of the most natural next steps is to put that compassion into action and be God's hands and feet to someone who is hurting, in Jesus's name. There are real opportunities, near and far, to serve people in need and join God in His work of restoration.

Ask God where He might be inviting you to serve. Then take a step: connect with a serving or compassion team and find a place to give away what you've received.

One More: Your Own Next Step

These weeks may have brought up a next step that is deeply personal, between you and God.

Maybe God became real to you in a new way over these eight weeks, and you want to follow Jesus for the first time. Maybe you have trusted Him for a while but have never been baptized, never told the story of your own creation, fall, and redemption through the waters of baptism, as we saw in Week Six. Or maybe your next step is quieter: a habit to surrender, a relationship to mend, or a step of obedience you've been putting off.

Whatever it is, respond to it before these eight weeks end. Tell your group leader, talk to a pastor, and take the step. Your story is still being written, and the best chapters may be the ones you say yes to next.

Remember the challenge from Week Eight. For the next seven days, set a daily reminder on your phone. When it goes off, tell God you're willing to share your story or His with anyone He brings across your path that day, and watch what happens.

You are living out God's story. Now go and help others discover theirs.