

LIVING *in* GOD'S STORY

TRACING THE STORY AND
MAJOR THEMES OF THE BIBLE



Main Goal for this Class: We want you to be a better and more confident reader of your Bible. We want you to read God's word, know God's word, love God's word, and apply God's word.

All of those things come from...

- A sense of **stability**, which comes from knowing the big picture of the story of Scripture, and leads to being able to say, "Oh, I actually know what is going on when I start reading Jonah or 2 Kings or Acts and why the details matter."
- A sense of **excitement**, which comes from tracing the major themes of the story and leads to being able to say, "Wow, I see the theme of God's presence or sacrifice or kingship in this story and how it is developing along the way and how it ultimately points to Jesus."
- A sense of **involvement**, which comes from seeing your place in the story and being able to say, "I finally see how what I am reading reveals something about me or my view of God or my how I am called to live or God's provision for me in salvation."
- **Schedule**
- **Format of Class**
 - Teaching
 - Reflection & Discussion during class
 - Outside Reading (almost always will be the Bible)
 - Missing a Class (recordings on www.trinitymboro.com/Gods-story)
- **Resources**
 - The Bible

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Living in God's Story: Tracing the Story and Major Themes of the Bible

Lesson 1

What Is the Bible?

I. What Is the Bible?

We often immediately start with what the Bible is *theologically*—It is the word of God, breathed out by God and used by the Holy Spirit to bring people to faith and make them “wise for salvation” (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

How would you describe it?

- 66 books
 - 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament
- Written over the course of 2,000 years
 - From Moses writing Genesis in about 1446 B.C. to John writing Revelation in about 95 A.D.
- On 3 different continents
 - Africa, Asia, and Europe
- In 3 different languages
 - Predominantly Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament, but also Aramaic in large parts of Daniel and Ezra, as well as other places

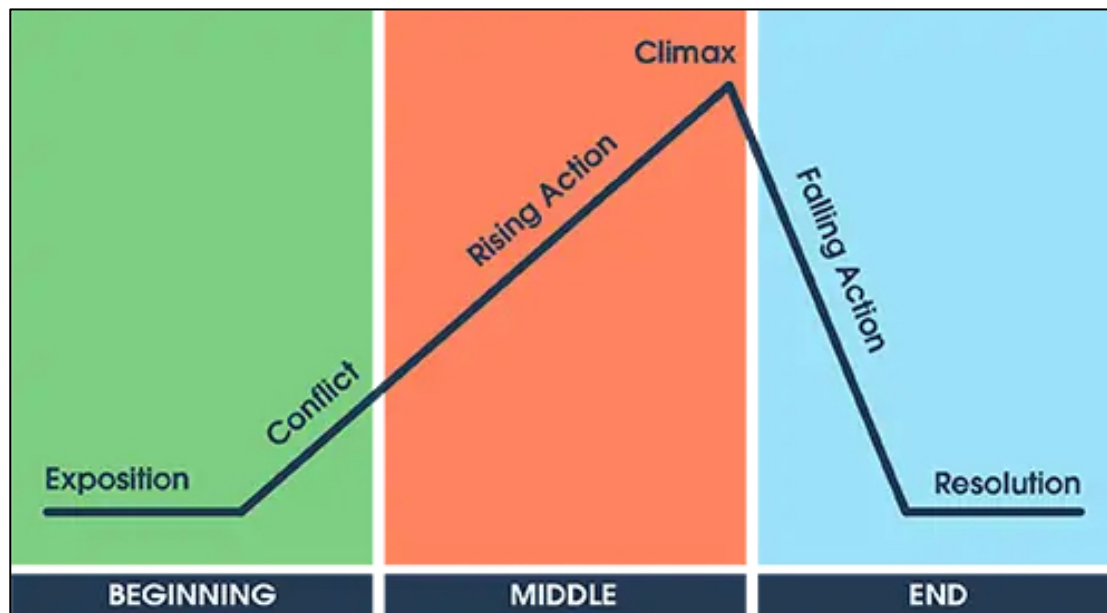
What kind of book is it? It has laws, poems, songs, prayers, letters, parables, history, predictions of the future, genealogies, directions for how to build things and how to kill things and how to wash things.

But most fundamentally, **the Bible is a story.**

The Greek word *biblos* (βιβλος) is where we get our word “Bible” from. It means “a book.” And that is actually a really important theological statement about what the Bible is. When we say the Bible is “a book,” we are saying that it may be a collection of lots of documents and books, but it is also true that it is a single book—it all holds together. Even with all of its diversity and differences, the Bible belongs together.

And it belongs together because it isn't just a random collection or assortment of documents. It is a collection of documents that were *intentionally crafted* and *put together* by God. And he did that to tell a story—one big, overarching story from beginning to end. The story of the world—the story of the beginning of the world, the purpose of the world, the ruining of the world, the saving of the world, and the future restoration of the world. The Bible isn't just a story; it is the story.

II. What Is a Story?

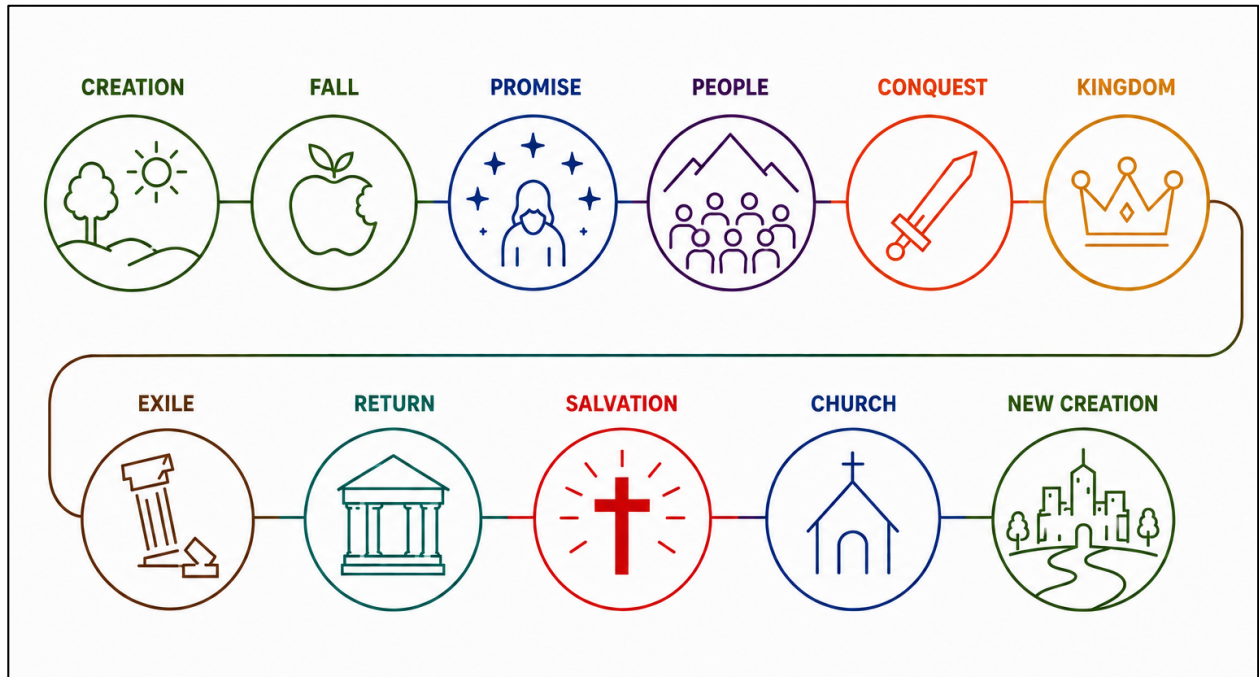


Little Red Riding Hood

- **Exposition/Introduction:** She is going to her grandmother's house to take her some cake and wine.
- **Inciting Incident/Conflict:** She meets a wolf in the woods and tells him what she is doing.
- **Rising Action:** The wolf sneaks ahead of her, gets to the house first, eats the grandmother, and dresses up as the grandmother; when she arrives, Red asks the wolf a series of questions, discovering the he is not her grandmother.
- **Climax:** The wolf eats Red.
- **Falling Action:** The woodsman hears the wolf snoring, comes to the rescue and cuts the wolf's stomach open, saving Red and her grandmother; then they put heavy stones in his stomach while he is sleeping.
- **Resolution:** The wolf wakes up and can't move because the stones are so heavy; he dies; the woodsman skins the wolf; the grandmother eats the food Red brought her, Red learns not to stray from the path, and they live happily ever after

III. How Can We Summarize the Story of the Bible?

Creation → Fall → Redemption → New Creation



But there are also **smaller stories within the one big story**; and each story has its own plot.

A. David & Goliath – what is the plot of this story?

But David & Goliath is a part of a larger story of Israel seeking a king.

- What is this story showing us when we back up and see it in the context of the larger story?

There is also a larger story of the promise of an offspring of Eve who would crush the head of the serpent, and of a King who would rule how God created us to rule in Adam's place.

- How does David fit into that larger story?

And how does David & Goliath foreshadow the resolution to **that big story of the Bible**?

B. All of the Bible is Christocentric & Christotelic

Luke 24, ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened....

²⁵And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself...

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Acts 2:14-41 (Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost) & Acts 7:1-53 (Stephen’s Speech before he is stoned) – Recounting the history of Israel and hope of the promises of God showing that it all culminated in Jesus.

C. You Are Involved in This Story

You are meant to see yourself in the characters (that’s what good stories do), but the Bible isn’t just Aesop’s Fables or Arabian Nights, which we might be able to learn something from but aren’t true and only have *symbolic* meaning.

You are actually a part of this story.

- Where are you in the story of David & Goliath?
- Where are you in the story of Adam and Eve?
 - o You can see yourself in some of the events and elements, but you are also *truly* and *really* there.

Romans 5:12-21, ...sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... many died through one man's trespass... the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation... because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man...

This is a reminder that we never read this story as curious bystanders. We read this story like we read our family history, or our country's history. It has real and true implications for us. Not just the laws or the rules but the events themselves.

Small Group Discussion

- Daniel & the Lions' Den (Daniel 6)
 - Jonah & the Whale (Jonah 1:17-2:10)
 - Paul's Conversion (Acts 9)
 - Noah & the Ark (Genesis 6-9)
 - Gideon's Fleece (Judges 6:36-40)
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1. Outline the plot of the story.
 2. Ask how the story changes when you think of it in broader context (use memory & flip around in your Bible).
 3. How does this story point to Jesus?
 4. Where are you in this story (there is not just one easy answer to this)?

IV. What Can We Do to Better Understand the Smaller Parts of the Bible in Relation to the Whole Story?

A. Memorize the 66 Books

Old Testament

- Pentateuch/Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy)
- Historical Books (Joshua–Esther)
- Wisdom Books/Poetry (Job–Song of Solomon)
- Major Prophets (Isaiah–Daniel)
- Minor Prophets (Hosea–Malachi)

New Testament

- Gospels (Matthew–John)
- Acts
- Paul's Letters (Romans–Philemon)
- General Letters/Catholic Epistles (Hebrews–Jude)
- Revelation/Apocalyptic

B. Memorize the Timeline of the Story

Time is sometimes just a number, but it also helps you imagine what something was like. The Bible zooms in and zooms out on time, sometimes giving huge chunks to small time-periods (1-2 Samuel, the Gospels, Acts) and other times saying massive amounts of time in one verse (Ex. 12:40, 430 years enslaved in Egypt). Knowing the timeline of Scripture—not just how long things lasted but how close events were together and which events overlapped—helps us to understand the story better.

Handouts:

- Old Testament Timeline
- Writings of the Prophets
- New Testament Timeline

Old Testament

- Abraham – 2166
- Isaac – 2066
- Jacob – 2006
- Joseph – 1915
- Moses – 1526
- Exodus from Egypt – 1466
- Entrance into Canaan – 1406
- Judges – 1375
- Saul's Regim – 1050-1010
- David's Reign – 1010-971
- Solomon's Reign – 971-931
- Kingdom Divided – 931
- Israel/Samaria Defeated by Assyria – 722
- Judah Defeated by Babylon – 586
- 1st Return to Jerusalem – 538
- 2nd Return – 458
- 3rd Return – 445

New Testament

- Birth of Jesus – 5 B.C.
- Jesus Begins his Ministry – 28-30 A.D.
- Jesus's Death & Resurrection – 30/33 A.D.
- Paul's Conversion – 33-34 A.D.
- Jerusalem Council – 48-49 A.D.
- Peter & Paul's Deaths – 65 A.D. (traditional date)
- Jerusalem Destroyed – 70 A.D.
- John Writes Revelation – 95 A.D.

V. Schedule for the Class

VI. Next Class: Rick is going to teach us more about Biblical Theology and the themes running through the story of the Bible

Small Group Discussion

- What are you excited about in this class?
- What do you pray God does in you through this class?
- What questions do you still have that you hope to have answered in this class?