



THE STORY

A PRIMER BY CHRIS SEIDMAN

85% of all American households have at least two Bibles. It's one thing to have a Bible. It's another thing to read it. That's why we're doing what we're doing with The Story. Consider this a primer for reading The Story and engaging with the series on the weekends in our services.

WHAT IS THE STORY?

The Story is a large portion of the Bible, but it's not the Bible in its entirety. It offers us a way to read through the Bible so that we can get a sense of the story of God from Genesis to Revelation.

It's primarily different from most of our Bibles in several ways. First, all the chapters and verses have been removed – so it reads more like a book or a novel. For instance, Chapter 1 is Genesis 1-4, 6-9. (By the way, in the back of The Story on page 494, you'll find the Scripture references for all the content in each chapter)

Another way it's a little different is sometimes you'll be reading along and suddenly start a new paragraph and realize – “Whoa, this sounds different than what I've just been reading.” Occasionally, the editors of The Story will incorporate a passage from another part of the Bible that sheds light on the story you are reading. For instance, when you're reading in the book of Genesis (Genesis 22) about the story of Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac, you'll suddenly run across a paragraph from the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 11) in the New Testament where the Hebrew writer makes a reference to that story and connects it to the story of faith and Christ. This is done in an effort to “zoom out” and remind you of a sense of the “big picture.”

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF IT

- **PRAY**

Ask the Lord to open your eyes and heart to what He has for you.

- **READ**

If you don't read it but hear the messages on the weekends, you will still get something out of it. But it will be like me giving you bottled water while you're standing right next to a river. Get in the river! There are going to be things God says to you through His word.

- **MAKE SOME NOTES**

Underline, write in the margins, keep a journal, etc.

Let me suggest a few questions as you read:

What did you read that's new to you? What did you read that touched you? What did you read that stumps you? What did you read that challenges you? Are there any connections you see to Jesus in what you are reading?

- **ENGAGE ON THE WEEKENDS WITH US**

Each weekend's sermon during this series will be based on the chapter we read in the previous week. For instance, in the first week of January, we're reading Chapter 1 (Genesis 1-4, 6-9). So, the sermon on January 7th will be from Chapter 1. Hopefully, when you join us for worship (or online), you'll have already read it. I'll reflect on some things from that chapter and share some applications for our lives.

The second week, we'll be reading Chapter 2, and then on January 14th, I'll share a message coming out of Chapter 2. Drawing upon the bottled water and river analogy – I hope my filtering and bottling can be of some help to you.

You can find a weekly schedule on your bookmark or at thebranch.org/the-story for what chapter we're reading each week and covering each weekend.

• PROCESS WITH OTHERS

Get with others who are going through The Story and process together. You can find discussion questions for each chapter in the back of The Story. A good number of our small groups are using this approach.

LET'S DIG IN!

In her book *Amazing Grace*, the writer and poet Kathleen Norris tells the story of her and her husband visiting Arlo, a rugged, self-made man facing terminal cancer. During their visit, Arlo started talking about his grandfather, a sincere Christian. The grandfather gave Arlo and his bride a wedding present: an expensive leather Bible with their names printed in gold lettering. Arlo left it in the box and never opened it. But for months afterward, his grandfather kept asking if he liked the Bible. Arlo told Norris, “The wife had written a nice thank-you note, and we’d thanked him in person, but somehow, he couldn’t let it lie; he always had to ask about it.”

Finally, Arlo grew curious enough to open the Bible. “The joke was on me,” Arlo said. “I finally took that Bible out of the closet, and I found that granddad had placed a twenty-dollar bill at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, and at the beginning of every book ... over thirteen hundred dollars in all. He knew I’d never find it.”

\$1300 is a lot of money. But there’s something even more valuable to be found in our journey through Scripture.

Hope.

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

Hope awaits. Let’s dig in!

