

Small Group Guide

A Note for Leaders

Welcome to The God Story small group guide. We hope that this resource will supplement The God Story book and The God Story sermon series by providing another learning environment that we pray will enable people to encounter the unfailing love of God in the unfolding narrative of scripture.

Each session of the series is designed to take one hour, but can easily be adapted to your group's needs.

Each session is structured in three main sections:

← Look back

- + Take time to share 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives and make space to pray for another.
- + You may also want to use this space to reflect ('look back') on some of the learning from The God Story's previous sessions or ways group members have applied the learning.

↑ Look up

- + The God Story is built around three main narrative strands which knit the overarching storyline together: Presence, Family and Kingdom. To set up the conversation, select different people to read each of the three summary paragraphs aloud and encourage people to reflect on them.

- + There are also key Bible passages which relate to each session. Take time to read one of these passages and encourage your group to listen to God through the passage, leaving space for reflection based around two specific questions each time:

Q What do we learn about God and people?

Q How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Asking the same two questions each time will help to emphasise The God Story's dual learning outcomes: to develop a grasp of the eternal purposes of God as they unfold through history and to experience a deeper personal sense of encounter as certain themes of The God Story are imprinted on people's hearts.

- + If members of the group are also reading The God Story book, encourage them to share any highlights from the corresponding chapter which stood out for them at this point.
- + You may also want to use 'additional (optional) questions' for further reflection – (these are the same questions which are included at the end of each chapter of The God Story book and The God Story Sermon Series for deeper levels of conversation.)

→ Look forward

- + At the end of the session encourage each person to think of at least one way they feel the Spirit is leading them to apply their learning to their life in the week ahead.
- + Share which chapter of The God Story you'll be reflecting on next so people can read it before you gather.
- + Leave space to pray for one another.

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Small Group Guide

1 The Origin

▶ Watch an introductory video to this session here:
24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

If the group is new, take time to get to know each other. Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: In the beginning God is love. Overflowing divine desire created beauty out of nothing. The crown of God's creation was human beings, those who bore God's image. God has a burning desire for friendship with humankind. He did not need our love but he wanted to be known. God walked with Adam and Eve 'in the cool of the day', enjoying intimate friendship. Eden was pure pleasure. God's intention was that we would live in free-flowing communion with him forever. This is our original design.

Family: God is an Eternal Family, a loving community of joy, honour and mutual submission. In creation God was opening up this community to include humankind. This is the home life of God each one of us has been invited into. As image-bearers we were created to live together as a reflection of the Eternal Family.

Kingdom: God created a world to be filled with his loving reign and rule, as a reflection of his own glory and beauty. Those made in his image were formed to co-create with God in extending the paradise of Eden, the culture of heaven, throughout the earth.”¹

Read:

Genesis 1:26-28 and/or Genesis 2:7-25

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:



What do we learn about God and people?



How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?*

***Additional note:** As this question will be asked in every session, you might find the following explanation helpful to unpack as a group:

Ephesians 3:10-11 says, *"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (NIV)

The God Story is all about discovering the eternal purpose of God as it unfolds throughout history. As a small group we will aim to trace this purpose through the narrative of scripture. Pay attention to the ways in which God reveals himself, how he lovingly pursues humanity, the covenant promises that God makes and his merciful provision. Discuss together how you see God's rescue, redemption, reconciliation and renewal in each part of the story. How is Jesus Christ either being foreshadowed or fulfilling God's eternal purpose?

Additional (optional) questions:



"How does it make you feel to know you have been invited into the love of the Eternal Family?



How does understanding the three elements of your original design (relationship with God; relationship with others; stewarding creation) help you understand God's call upon your life?" ²

Also share any highlights which stood out for you in the corresponding chapter of The God Story book.

→ Look Forward

- + Encourage the group to share their key learning from this session and any ways they may desire to apply this learning to their lives.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, 'The Fall'.

Group prayer

*"Father, help us to know more of your passionate desire to be with us. Help us to grow in friendship with you, to walk with you 'in the cool of the day'. We want to be formed in the love of the Eternal Family so we can participate with you in your dream for the world. We want to rediscover what it is to co-create with you to bring about your kingdom throughout the earth."*³

End of small group guide 1

¹ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.16

² Ibid, p.16

³ Ibid, p.16

Small Group Guide

2 The Fall

▷ Watch an introductory video to this session here:

24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: God’s heart has been broken by Adam and Eve’s disobedience. The communion God wanted to enjoy with humanity has been drastically and devastatingly impacted. Adam and Eve will walk out of Eden. Yet God can’t stand the distance. He will pursue his lost sons and daughters in the hope they will return to this place of friendship with him. From this point on, God’s cry to Adam and Eve, ‘Where are you?’ will echo throughout history. Despite our sin, God still wants us.

Family: The effects of humankind’s sin had catastrophic consequences for their relationships with one another. God’s dream for a family reflecting his nature on the earth looks to be in tatters. In stealing our identity, the enemy has turned us against one another – the Blame Game has begun. Comparison, jealousy, division and war result.

Kingdom: A dark and opposing force, Satan, has entered the story. From this point on, the kingdom of darkness will contest the plans and purposes of God in the world.

Tragically, rather than fulfilling their original glory of extending the loving reign of God, humankind have only sought to build their own kingdoms: Adam and Eve. Cain. Humankind before the Flood. Babel. Disconnected from the true Source of our lives, humankind will do untold damage to creation rather than steward it gloriously.”⁴

Read:

Genesis 3:1-10 and/or Genesis 11:1-9

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:



What do we learn about God and people?



How do we see God’s eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:



***Additional note:** You might like to use these questions as a time of personal reflection rather than group discussion, given the personal focus of these questions.



“Is there anything causing you to hide from God in fear, or to cover yourself because of shame?



Sin ruins relationships. Is there any relationship you have that needs to be reconciled?



What steps can you take now towards that end?”⁵

Also share any highlights which stood out for you in the corresponding chapter of The God Story book.

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, ‘The Seed of Promise’.

Group prayer

*“Father, we recognise our sin breaks your heart as you watch us damage ourselves, one another, and the world you created and asked us to steward. Our hearts are moved, though, as we realise you can’t stand the distance. We hear you cry out to us, ‘Where are you?’ We repent of our sin, Father. Help us to reject the deceptions of the enemy – fear and shame and the Blame Game – and come home to your love.”*⁶

End of small group guide 2

⁴ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.38

⁵ Ibid, p.28

⁶ Ibid, p.28

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3 The Seed of Promise

▶ Watch an introductory video to this session here:
24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: God gave Abraham a spectacular promise: blessing to all nations. But God had to teach Abraham the ultimate promise was his presence! God alone was Abraham's reward! The seed of God's promise could only be planted in a heart totally surrendered to and in perfect friendship with God. As Abraham laid Isaac on the altar, God knew he had found the right person to carry his dream for the world.

Family: God's way to win all the families of the earth was through a family. Through Abraham's faith, passed on to his many sons and daughters, the promise of blessing to all would come. Covenant was how God would seal his intimate relationship with

Abraham and his descendants – a promise to give everything you are and will be for the sake of the other. Covenant was the cornerstone of the family God wanted to form on the earth, a reflection of the love of the Eternal Family.

Kingdom: God's desire to fill the earth with his loving rule and reign is contained in his radical promise to Abraham – through you all nations will be blessed – which will pass through Abraham to all of humankind. The original dream of Eden extending through the earth is back on track. Abraham's story teaches us God's kingdom will not come through human striving and engineering (Ishmael) but through joyful surrender and trust (Isaac). When God finds this kind of faith and trust, the supernatural power of his kingdom will be released, even in bodies as good as dead.”⁷

Read:

Genesis 15:1-6 and/or Genesis 17:1-8

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:



What do we learn about God and people?



How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:



“Where are you being invited to trust God and follow his voice no matter the cost?



Is there any area in your life where you are trying to engineer God's promise in your own wisdom instead of wholeheartedly trusting God's plan?”⁸

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, 'The Birth of a Nation'.

Group prayer

“Father, help us, like Abraham and Sarah, to hear your voice wooing us away from the familiar, to come and walk with you. Help us to trust in your promise over our lives even though we can't see how it will unfold. Forgive us when we try to engineer your plans in our own strength. Help us to wholeheartedly surrender to you so we can play our part.”⁹

End of small group guide 3

⁷ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.54

⁸ *Ibid*, p.54

⁹ *Ibid*, p.54

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4 The Birth of a Nation

▶ Watch an introductory video to this session here:
24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: God’s promise of his presence has not failed Abraham’s descendants 400 years later when they are bound up in slavery in Egypt. God ‘comes down’ to lead the slaves out and into destiny. His presence – a cloud by day and fire by night – will guide them into their inheritance. As for Abraham, God has plans for them beyond what they can imagine, but they must learn his presence is their ultimate inheritance. God confirms this through the instructions of the tabernacle. He wants to dwell among them. But the Israelites don’t really get it. Except Moses. He knows God’s presence alone is what sets them apart. ‘If you do not go with us, do not send us up from here.’ God is undone. Moses’ actions have revealed the essence of the plot. God wants to be one with us.

Family: God brings the Hebrew slaves out of the harsh reality of Egyptian authoritarian rule to form them into a loving family. This will not be easy but God will not settle for less. God will call them his own treasured possession, shaping them into a society that looks like the Eternal Family. God's commandments to bring order to their community life will carry vertical and horizontal dimensions because God wants his family to love him and to overflow with love for one another.

Kingdom: The power-hungry empire of Egypt is the antithesis of the kingdom of God. God dismantles the unjust systems of the empire to reveal his loving reign based on justice and compassion for all. He is making the former despised slaves into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation – a people who will connect the beauty of heaven to the brokenness of earth. God wants this community to showcase his purposes to the nations so the whole earth will be filled with his loving reign.”¹⁰

Read:

Exodus 3:1-15 and/or Exodus 33:12-34:8

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:



What do we learn about God and people?



How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:



“How does it make you feel to know God calls you his treasured possession, set apart for him to connect the beauty of heaven to the brokenness of earth?”
(Deuteronomy 7:6)¹¹

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Israel’.

Group prayer

“Father, thank you that you liberate us into freedom where you want to dwell among us. Help us, like Moses, to settle for nothing less than your presence. Help us to love you above all else and love our neighbours so we can help connect heaven to earth.”¹²

End of small group guide 4

¹⁰ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.73

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.74

¹² *Ibid*, p.73

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5 The Rise and Fall of Israel

▶ Watch an introductory video to this session here:
24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: The rise of Israel was a result of their prioritisation of God's presence; conversely, the fall of Israel was connected to a lack of honour for it. Their leaders epitomised this pattern. Joshua, Hannah, Samuel, David and Josiah were people who prioritised the presence of God and therefore stewarded God's favour, leading the people into blessing. The kings who didn't honour God's presence led the nation into perilous times. David, in all his weakness and sin, gives us glimpses into what it is to live a life longing for the presence of God above all. He built a permanent home for God, a picture of God's original dream: ongoing communion with his image-bearers.

Family: The result of Israel's rise under the favour of God was a spirit of unity among the 12 tribes, honouring one another in harmony and one-mindedness. On the other hand, when the children of Israel became self-centred and prideful, the dysfunctions in their relationships escalated into shattering division. In the second half of Solomon's reign, Israel resembled the dominating empire of Egypt more than God's loving family.



Kingdom: God had promised to give Israel a land. But God wanted them to populate it with the culture of God's kingdom. Humble obedience and trust in God were needed to see strongholds fall as they lived into their inheritance. But a major shift took place under Samuel's leadership: Israel wanted to mimic the other nations and asked for a king. God felt this rejection deeply but granted their request. God had wanted Israel to carry his loving rule together, shepherded by leaders who carried his heart." ¹³

Read:



Joshua 1:1-9 and/or 2 Samuel 7:1-6

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:

-  What do we learn about God and people?
-  How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:

-  "Despite David's weaknesses, he asked God for an undivided heart (Psalm 86:11). What are the sins or distractions that could divide your heart?"
-  Israel put their hope in human kings over and above God. Why do we often put our hope in other leaders rather than God? Discuss the consequences of such." ¹⁴

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, 'The Prophets and Exile'.

Group prayer

*"Father, may your presence be the one thing we desire. Help us to understand the consequences of a divided heart. Forgive us when we elevate other leaders above you. We trust your good leadership to form us into a family reflecting your heart."*¹⁵

End of small group guide 5

¹³ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.92

¹⁴ Ibid, p.93

¹⁵ Ibid, p.92

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6 The Prophets and Exile

▶ Watch an introductory video to this session here:
24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: Even though the children of Israel continue to rebel against God, he continues to speak of his deep longing for them through the prophets, how he cannot forget them, how he will forgive them and take them back to himself. But their ongoing disobedience means God will allow his people to be carried into exile. Yet, even in exile God will find them. Ezekiel's river will remind them God's presence is flowing to them even in darkest Babylon.

Family: The tribes of Israel may have completely divided but God outlines his hope to rebuild his family in exile. Shalom is the word God calls the exiles to seek for their families and the city of their captors. God wants to rebuild his family on the healthy

foundations of his peaceful presence. Israel will only testify to glimpses of this in the years ahead, but even before God goes silent for 400 years he will speak, through Malachi, of a future when the hearts of parents and children will be turned to one another in a beautiful promise of family unity.



Kingdom: Israel has been swallowed up by the Babylonian kingdom but a vision for God's people extending his loving rule and reign on the earth still remains. Ezekiel speaks of an army rising up from a valley of dry bones filled with the breath of God. Isaiah declares Israel will still be a light to all nations – a sure sign the seed of promise given to Abraham is still alive. Jeremiah declares even Babylon will experience God's shalom. The prophets declare the other kingdoms will come and go. God's shalom points to an everlasting kingdom.”¹⁶

Read:



Jeremiah 3:6-20 and/or Isaiah 43:18-21

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:

-  What do we learn about God and people?
-  How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:

-  “Discuss how encouraging it is to know that God's presence flows to us even during our seasons of exile.
-  What does it look like for you in your everyday life to seek the shalom of your town or city?”¹⁷

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the interlude section ‘The Silence’ and next chapter from The God Story, ‘The Son’.

Group prayer

“Father, thank you that even when we are in exile your presence will find us. Help us to know the hope-filled possibilities for our lives when we are consumed with our own brokenness, pain or the consequences of our sin. May we experience your shalom deep in our hearts and may it pulse through us to transform others with your love.”¹⁸

End of small group guide 6

¹⁶ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.111

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.111

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.111

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7 The Son

▷ Watch an introductory video to this session here:

24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: The Word has become flesh and dwelt among us. The hot-spot of God’s presence, once the holy of holies in the tabernacle, has now become the body of Jesus. God has come close to us. Jesus is God with skin. God can be touched, heard, seen. Also, Jesus shows us what a human being walking in intimate friendship with the Father looks like. Everything he does flows from a place of beloved sonship.

Family: The words of John the Baptist at the start of the New Testament pick up from the words of Malachi at the end of the Old Testament. A picture of unified generations is a sign that the way of Jesus is being prepared. God is making his home on the earth in the context of a human family. Jesus will have a mum and a dad, and be nurtured and formed through the family structure he will be raised in. God is living in his own original design. As Jesus apprentices his father, Joseph, he is simultaneously learning

the ways of his heavenly Father. After 30 years of maturing in sonship Jesus will hear words of divine pleasure from the Father: 'You are my beloved Son and I am well pleased with you.'



Kingdom: As the angels declare 'good news of great joy for all peoples' at the birth of Jesus we can hear the same covenantal language contained in God's promises to Abraham – blessing to all nations! In the 30 years Jesus spends enjoying the gift of everyday life and revelling in his Father's creation, we see the kind of kingdom God is bringing to earth. Everything Jesus touches is being made holy again, all of creation will be renewed." ¹⁹

Read:



Luke 2:26-38 and/or Matthew 3:13-17

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:

-  What do we learn about God and people?
-  How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:

-  "In what parts of your everyday life might Jesus be wanting you to notice his presence?"
-  Encourage your heart to be still. Sink into God's presence and listen for the whisper of, 'you are my beloved' spoken over you." ²⁰

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, 'The King'.

Group prayer

"Jesus, thank you for becoming like us; for identifying with us in the closest possible way; for showing us how to live a life of beloved sonship/daughterhood. Father, help us to hear your words, 'you are my beloved' spoken over us. May we live from this place, enjoying the wonder of who you are and all you have made." ²¹

End of small group guide 7

¹⁹ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.134

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.134

²¹ *Ibid*, p.134

Small Group Guide

8 The King

▶ Watch an introductory video to this session here:
24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: Jesus came proclaiming a whole new level of accessibility to the presence of God – heaven and earth were overlapping and interlocking in the body of Jesus. As Jesus made friends with people from every type of background he was vividly revealing God's desire to come close to us. Jesus' own life demonstrated the priority of the presence of God, withdrawing often to be with the Father and teaching his disciples to do the same – to abide in God's presence and to address God intimately as 'Abba'.

Family: Jesus' strategy for his kingdom mission was family. What he had always enjoyed in heaven he would now reproduce on the earth. Jesus built a team of friends around him who walked with him throughout his three-year ministry. He loved his own biological family but was welcoming everyone as his brothers and sisters. This deeply relational context was the place where Jesus disciplined his friends. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus revealed God's vision for nothing less than a new human society, a family established on sacrificial love.

Kingdom: Plan A was being reinstated. Jesus had come to restore God's loving rule and reign on the earth. As the Anointed One (the Christ), Jesus lived zero-resistant to the Holy Spirit's power flowing through his life. His life-giving words, prolific teaching and miracles were all signs revealing who the true King of the universe really was. The kingdom will always look like the King. Jesus had come to reorder the world on an axis of sacrificial love. The way to enter this kingdom was repentance – giving up every other allegiance, and following Jesus and his kingdom.”²²

Read:

Luke 4:14-30 and/or Matthew 4:23-5:11

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:



What do we learn about God and people?



How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:



“Jesus revealed the heart of the Father! Why is it so crucial we understand this?



At the heart of Jesus' ministry was his commitment to discipling those closest to him. Who are the people God has called you to disciple? Who is discipling you?²³

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, 'The Passion'.

Group prayer

“Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to reveal to us the Father. For demonstrating what a life of abiding in the Father will look like – welcoming sinners, offering forgiveness, healing diseases, delivering the oppressed, celebrating the outcasts. We repent of every other love and allegiance, Jesus. We want to be your disciples.”²⁴

End of small group guide 8

²² Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.154

²³ Ibid, p.155

²⁴ Ibid, p.154

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9 The Passion

▷ Watch an introductory video to this session here:

24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: The cross of Christ leaves us in no doubt – God could not stand the distance between himself and humanity. Jesus willingly offered himself up to free us from sin so we might come into the full knowledge of his presence in our lives. Jesus' death ripped open the temple veil. No longer would the manifest presence of God be restricted to one person, in a physical building, only to be accessed once a year. Now the presence of God was moving into all the broken parts of the world, pursuing us in relentless love.

Family: Jesus carried his family and friends with him right through to the end. He cried out to the Father the night before he died that his followers would know the same love the Eternal Family enjoyed. Jesus longed to be with the Father but equally longed for the disciples to share in this loving union. It would be their love for one another that would define them as his disciples. They would learn to wash one another's feet. Even as Jesus hung on the cross, looking at his mother and John, he was thinking of the kingdom family.

Kingdom: As Jesus cried it was ‘finished’, the power of every rival kingdom was defeated. As he rose from the grave, new creation had begun. The glorious everlasting kingdom of the future was ushered into our present reality. Jesus had revealed the kingdom for his three years of ministry on the earth. Now through his death and resurrection he was handing the keys of the kingdom on to his followers. They would carry his authority into the world, embodying Jesus’ love and power in their own lives.” ²⁵

Read:

John 13:1-17 and/or Matt 27:27-56

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:



What do we learn about God and people?



How do we see God’s eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:



“How does it make you feel to know Jesus died to bring you into the glorious presence of the Eternal Family?



How empowering is it to think that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us?” ²⁶

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, ‘The Church’.

Group prayer

“Father, no words can express our gratitude for the cross. Jesus, thank you for dying for us, for freeing us from our sin, for bringing us into a living relationship with you. Thank you that we can live in your love, find a home in your family and walk into a glorious future. We praise you for rising triumphantly from the grave, defeating sin, death and hell. You are our risen King!” ²⁷

End of small group guide 9

²⁵ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.174

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.175

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.174

Small Group Guide

10 The Church

▶ Watch an introductory video to this session here:

24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: The Church is a movement of the Spirit, God's own personal presence. At Pentecost the disciples were baptised by the Spirit and immersed in God's love and power. From this point on every person acknowledging Jesus as Lord and yielding to him would be filled with God on the inside. Flash-flooded by the Spirit, the Church was empowered to continue Jesus' mission on the earth as presence-people! God's new home on earth was a temple made of living stones where his presence would dwell.

Family: Jesus formed a new family on the earth. A holy community revealing the Eternal Family's dream from the beginning. The Spirit was binding the disciples deep as a kindred family. They would learn to love one another like Jesus. What started as a small Jewish community would grow to become a diverse multi-ethnic global family united in Jesus. Led by the apostles, the Church came to understand itself as Christ's body on the earth, each believer a member playing a crucial part. As they multiplied throughout the world they came to understand themselves as a spiralling family of families. And as they did they unveiled the mystery of God's manifold wisdom to the world: the Church.



Kingdom: The Church is a colony of heaven. A community that both acts as a signpost to the eternal kingdom to come and demonstrates that kingdom availability now. Jesus is building his Church and the kingdom of darkness will not prevail against it. This is what Pentecost was all about. God in all flesh. Those who love Jesus can walk in the power of the Spirit – proclaiming the kingdom with their words, embodying the kingdom through their acts of mercy and demonstrating the kingdom through signs and wonders.”²⁸

Read:



Acts 2:1-21 and/or Ephesians 3:7-21

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:

-  What do we learn about God and people?
-  How do we see God’s eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:

-  “Pause and invite the Holy Spirit to fill and baptise you afresh now.
-  How is the community of the Church different from any other community or citizenship that has ever existed?”²⁹

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, ‘The Revelation’.

Group prayer

“Father, thank you that you want to fill us with your Spirit, to flash-flood our lives with your love and power. Holy Spirit, baptise us with your fire once again. Father, thank you for forging us into a beautiful community of brothers and sisters from every tribe and tongue, the greatest movement the world has ever known.”³⁰

End of small group guide 10

²⁸ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story*; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.194

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.195

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.194

Small Group Guide

11 The Revelation

▷ Watch an introductory video to this session here:

24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up

Select a different person to read each of the strands listed below. Use these three paragraphs as an introductory overview of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book and/or The God Story Sermon Series. This will help to set the scene for discussion.

“Presence: As we await Jesus' return he calls us to patiently endure with the promise of his presence. Jesus reveals himself as the glorious, exalted Lord walking among the lampstands (churches). He reassures us he is with us in the pressure. As we receive fresh throne-ward vision of who Jesus is and the awesomeness of his presence we are moved from familiar to fascinated all over again. We only know in part but one day we will see him face to face. This is our anchoring hope. One day we will know as we are fully known in the perfection of his presence. God will dwell with humanity forever.

Family: As we lift our eyes above the pressure to worship Jesus we see people from every tribe and tongue surrounding the throne. God's dream will be fulfilled; representatives from every nation and family on the earth will be gathered around the throne. Every cultural barrier will be broken down, every relational hurt will be healed, every social class eroded. We will be one as the Eternal Family are one. In the meantime

we endure together as the family of God, bearing one another's burdens. Joined with the Spirit we cry out together, *Come, Lord Jesus*.



Kingdom: The Revelation of Jesus reminds the Church that our destiny is to rule and reign with God in his eternal kingdom. A universal reign of peace will be established in the new heaven and earth. The opposing kingdom of darkness will be defeated once and for all. In the meantime the new creation project is moving through the nations and we have been handed the keys of the kingdom to help advance it. We walk and love in the way of the Lamb slain, the only one worthy to open the scroll, our Bridegroom King who will return soon for his bride. Until that time we pray as Jesus taught us." ³¹

Read:



Revelation 4:1-11 and/or Revelation 21:1-8

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:

-  What do we learn about God and people?
-  How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:

-  "Are there any areas of your life where Jesus is encouraging you to 'come up higher' to receive fresh throne-ward vision?"
-  How does a vision of God's future kingdom inspire and empower you to live faithfully for Jesus in the present?" ³²

→ Look Forward

- + Share what you have learned in this session and any ways you may desire to apply this learning to your life.
- + Before the next session, take time to read the next chapter from The God Story, 'Stepping into the Story'.

Group prayer

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen." ³³

End of small group guide 11

³¹ Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.212

³² *Ibid*, p.213

³³ Matthew 6:9-13

Small Group Guide

12 Conclusion: Stepping into the Story

▷ Watch an introductory video to this session here:
24-7prayer.com/godstoryresources

← Look Back

Share some of the 'highs' and 'lows' from each other's lives in the past week and pray for one another. Also take some time to recap on the last session and ways group members have applied the learning from this session.

↑ Look Up



In this final study, continue to think around the three narrative strands which knit the overarching storyline together: Presence, Family and Kingdom. With those in mind, mediate on the passage below:

Read:




Luke 24:13-25

Questions for reflection:

Encourage discussion around these two questions:

-  What do we learn about God and people?
-  How do we see God's eternal purpose unfolding in this part of the story?

Additional (optional) questions:

-  How does knowing the God Story help you fall more in love with the Author?
-  In what ways does understanding the God Story help make sense of your own story?
-  In what ways do you feel God is calling you to participate (take up your role) in the God Story?

→ Look Forward

- + Take time to pray a prayer of commission over each person in the group as you step into the unfolding God Story together.

Group prayer

"Father, thank you for the wonder of your story which you have been unfolding throughout the ages. Thank you for entrusting me to partner with you in sharing it with others and helping them to discover their place within it. Jesus, continue to teach and make the story known to me. Spirit, continue to fill and empower me to make it known to others. Father, may I forever be fuelled by your love. Use my life for your glory. Amen."

End of small group guide 12