

8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY FOR TEEN GUYS

UNFOLDED

THE STORY OF GOD

ERIC GEIGER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERIC GEIGER serves as a Senior Vice President at LifeWay Christian Resources, leading the Resources Division. Eric received his doctorate in leadership and church ministry from Southern Seminary. Eric has authored or co-authored several books including *Creature of the Word* and the best-selling church leadership book, *Simple Church*.

Eric is married to Kaye, and they have two daughters: Eden and Evie. During his free time, Eric enjoys dating his wife, playing with his daughters, and shooting basketball.

INTRODUCTION

Tell me about yourself.

Whether it's on a job interview, a first date, or the first day of school, we've all been asked: Tell me about yourself. It's what we say when we want to get to know someone—to learn about who they really are beyond their basic biographical facts. That's why when someone asks, you don't respond with, "Well, I'm 6-foot-1 and 180 pounds. I was born at 11:43 am on October 3, and my mother's maiden name is Albright." That would be super awkward, and it would totally miss the point. When we ask people to tell us about themselves, we don't want stats—we want a story.

We want to know who they are. What they're passionate about. We want to know what makes them who they really are.

God wants to be known. He is not a silent God. He wants to be known by you. Thankfully, He gave us a Story, in which He reveals Himself fully to us. That's the Bible.

And there's no better story ever written.

We love stories because they're epic. We binge watch season after season, hour after hour, because every season—every series as a whole—tells a story. Each episode is always part of a bigger narrative.

You could watch an episode of *The Office* or *Stranger Things* and get the gist. But if someone pressed you to tell the whole story, you'd have no idea. You wouldn't know how what you saw played into the larger narrative. Knowing the details from one episode is very different from knowing the storyline.

That's how many of us are with the Bible—even those of us who know the stories and have memorized the verses.

Because the Bible is God's story where He reveals Himself to us, we must see it as one story. And there is no better hero, no higher stakes, no greater rescue, and no better ending than what we discover in His story. Every other story pales in comparison. And all of it is true and has deep implications for us today.

That's what is so exciting about the Bible—and why He has invited us in.

HOW TO USE

Welcome to *Unfolded: The Story of God*. This study is designed to be used in a small group setting with weekly group meetings. However, it could also be used by an individual, in one-on-one mentoring, or adapted for an extended youth retreat.

BIBLE STUDY BOOK

Listed below are the different elements in the Bible study book.

Group Discussion

Questions are provided to help start the conversation.

Personal Study

Four days of personal Bible study will help reinforce the teaching and provide an opportunity to study passages or themes not covered in the group discussion.

Leader Guide

The leader guide at the back of the study provides ideas for activities and deeper discussions.

SESSION OUTLINE

Design your group sessions to fit the space, time, and needs of your guys. The following is a sample group session outline that you can adapt.

1. Opening.

Review the material in the previous week's personal Bible study.

2. Group Discussion.

Scripture and discussion questions are provided to help foster conversation among the group.

3. Closing.

Close the session with prayer.

LEADER TIPS

Listed below are some tips to make this an effective and meaningful study for you and the young men you lead.

Pray diligently.

Ask God to prepare you to lead this study. Pray individually and specifically for the guys in your group. Make this a priority in your personal walk and preparation.

Prepare adequately.

Don't just wing this. Take time to preview each session so you have a good grasp of the content. Look over the group discussion questions and consider your group of guys. Feel free to delete or reword the questions provided, and add other questions that fit your group.

Provide resources.

Each student will need a Bible study book. Try to have extras on hand for guys who join the group later in the study.

Encourage freely.

Champion the students doing this study, encouraging them to participate in every part of the study.

Lead by example.

Make sure you complete all the personal Bible studies. Be willing to share your story, what you're learning, and your questions as you discuss together.

Be aware.

If guys are hesitant to discuss their thoughts and questions in a larger group, consider dividing into smaller groups to provide a setting more conducive to conversation.

Follow up.

If a participant mentions a prayer request or need, make sure to follow up. It may be a situation where you can get others in the group involved in helping out.

Evaluate often.

After each session and throughout the study, assess what needs to be changed to more effectively lead the study.

THE STORY OF GOD TIMELINE

2000 BC



CREATION & FALL

The self-sufficient and eternal God lovingly creates a perfect creation with humanity as His crowning work. Falling for Satan's temptation, humanity rebels, and sin enters the world bringing death, pain, and strife. Instead of giving up on humanity, God promises that from the womb of a woman will come the One who will crush Satan's head.

2000 BC



PROMISE & A PEOPLE

God pursues Abraham, a man from an idol-worshipping family who has no children with his wife, and promises that he will be the father of many nations. God promises land to Abraham and assures him that all nations will be blessed through his offspring. God continues to be faithful to this family. He restates the promise to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob (who is renamed Israel). A famine strikes the promised land, so Jacob and the family move to Egypt where one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, is already there to provide for the family.

1400 BC



RESCUE & LAW

The family becomes a nation while living in Egypt, but also becomes enslaved to the Egyptians. God raises up Moses to lead His people to freedom. During a tenth plague, God strikes dead the firstborn son of everyone living in Egypt, but "passes over" Israel as they put the blood of lambs on their doorposts. After miraculously rescuing His people, God gives His people the law. He also instructs them to build a tabernacle and offer sacrifices so He may dwell among them.

1000 BC



LAND & KINGDOM

God brings His people, through their leader Joshua, into the promised land. When God's people worship the gods of the nations surrounding them, God disciplines them through the attacks of surrounding nations. God raises up judges (or rulers) to rescue His people and call them to repentance. They beg for a king to be like other nations, and God gives them Saul. God raises up a new king, David, and promises that his kingdom will never end. The family that turned into a nation is now a kingdom. David's son, Solomon, builds a temple to replace the tabernacle.

600 BC



EXILE & RETURN

Solomon takes foreign wives and allows their foreign gods to clutter the land. His son continues the line of rulers and the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Prophets confront the people but they persist in their idolatry. The Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom is carried away into Babylonian captivity. When they are freed, they return to a nation and kingdom far less glorious than before and are still unable to keep their promises.

AD



JESUS

A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

AD 30



A NEW PEOPLE

After His ascension to heaven, Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit and His disciples turn the world upside down preaching the good news of Jesus. In the midst of intense persecution, the gospel spreads, and Gentiles and Jews form a new people. Churches are planted in cities, and apostles write letters encouraging and instructing the people in the grace of Christ and their response to His grace.



A BETTER BEGINNING

A time is coming where God's people—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who have been rescued by Christ—will enjoy Him and His rule forever in perfect harmony. Satan will be crushed, the effects of sin will be reversed, and all things will be made new.

SEASON 1

CREATION & FALL

GOD THE CREATOR AND
CLOTHING MAKERCREATION
& FALL2000 BC
PROMISE &
A PEOPLE1400 BC
RESCUE
& LAW1000 BC
LAND &
KINGDOM600 BC
EXILE &
RETURNAD
JESUSAD 30
A NEW
PEOPLEA BETTER
BEGINNING

WHO IS GOD?

Read Genesis 1:1-5.

Read Genesis 2:4.

From the very beginning, God wants us to know all about who He is. Here are five thoughts to keep in mind about God as He is introducing Himself to us:

1. He **is**.
2. He is the **creator**.
3. He is **self-sufficient**.
4. He is **gracious** and **loving**.
5. He is **powerful** and **wise**.

Which of the five statements about God means the most to you? Why?

WHO ARE WE?

Read Genesis 1:26-27.

You are the crowning work of God's creation. We are not like God, but we are also not like the rest of His creation. Here are three things God intended man to do:

- We were created to **reflect** His image.
- We were created to **rule** over creation.
- We were created to **relate** to others.

What does it mean to reflect God's image as a man?

Why did God think it was important for man to not be alone?

THE MESS WE MADE

Read *Genesis 3:1-8*.

God was good and gracious by creating us in His image, but we chose to decide for ourselves what was right and wrong. Instead of reflecting His image, we rebelled. Instead of ruling over creation, creation ruled over us.

When was a time you decided for yourself what was right or wrong for your life?
What happened?

How does Satan still use the same type of temptation he used in the garden in our lives today?

Why is it significant that Adam and Eve felt shame after they sinned?

OUR HOPE

Read Genesis 3:15 out loud.

This is the first time the gospel is announced—right here in Genesis 3. After God sees us sin, He tells Satan: *A time is coming when there will be One greater than you, who will destroy you.* He's talking about Jesus. Even at the start, the whole epic story of the Bible is pointing to Christ.

Read Genesis 3:21.

Even though Adam and Eve wanted to be in charge, God didn't let them go. Like before, this image points us to Christ and His sacrifice on the cross for our sin: Even as we've rebelled, God pursues us to clothe us with His forgiveness and righteousness.

Why does the gospel show up so early in the story?

In what ways has God pursued you?



SEASON 1

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

In our first group session, we discussed how God introduced Himself by revealing that He is the One who created everything—including us. However, instead of being grateful for His gift of creation, we, humanity, rebelled against the rule of God, as seen in Genesis 3.

Our next group session will begin in Genesis 12, as we focus on God's pursuit of a people for Himself, through a man named Abram. The personal studies this week focus on events that happen in God's story between the fall of humanity and the call of Abram.

DAY 1

BROKENNESS & BLESSED EXCHANGE

GENESIS 3:8-19

In the beginning of God's story, we saw Him lovingly create humanity. We were the crowning work of His creation, and everything was perfect. The second chapter in Genesis ends with a statement of peace:

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

GENESIS 2:24-25

No shame. Can you imagine life with no shame?

No guilt when you make a mistake. No regrets when you wish you had made a different choice. No grief over words you didn't say. Absolutely no shame.

Of course, all that changed in the very next chapter of Genesis when humanity rejected God's rule. Sin entered the world and shame came along with it. Peace was broken. The entrance of sin into the world was not a minor adjustment to God's creation. It affected everything.

Read Genesis 3:8-19 to see the aftermath.

Look up the word shame in the dictionary and write out the definition below. What did it mean for Adam and Eve to not feel shame? How did their relationship change once they did?

Peace with God was broken.

They hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

GENESIS 3:8

Adam and Eve realized they were naked and hid from the Lord among the trees. Instead of running to God, they ran from him. The “no shame” in Genesis 2 was traded for shame, guilt, and remorse.

Peace with each other was broken.

Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

GENESIS 3:16B

Instead of caring for his wife, Adam turned on her. Like a little kid pointing the finger at his brother, Adam defended himself before God by blaming Eve. This is not the type of men God created us to be—shirking responsibility and shifting blame.

As a consequence of her sin, God told Eve that there would be relational tension between her and her husband. But this doesn’t just happen in marriages. All types of relationships have tension now: broken friendships, conflicts with parents and teachers, heated arguments with coaches—all are examples of broken peace.

Peace within ourselves was broken.

You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life.

GENESIS 3:17C

God told Adam that work would now be filled with painful labor. As a man, all the jobs you hold now and in the future—even if they are awesome and you love what you do—will not ultimately satisfy you. Our souls can only be quenched by God.

What do you see yourself doing in 10 years? Do you think you’ll be satisfied?

Peace with our world was broken.

The ground is cursed because of you ...

GENESIS 3:17B

Because of the fall, all of creation bears the weight of corruption. Sin has ravaged our world, and we all face the ramifications every day. War, disease, natural disasters, and death are all the results of living in a broken world.

Is there any solution for our brokenness? For the shame we now face?

What are some examples of the brokenness from the fall that you can see in the world?

Thankfully we can read about the shame of Genesis 3 with our eyes fixed on Jesus. When the apostle Paul wrote about marriage several thousand years later, he referenced Genesis 2 to show us how Christ loves us. He wrote:

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church.

EPHESIANS 5:31-32

The word *mystery* here does not refer to something too deep or complex to understand, but to something that was hidden in the Old Testament that has now been revealed for our understanding and enjoyment. And Paul made the mystery clear: “I am talking about Christ and the church.” When one becomes a Christian, one is united with Christ.

When Adam and Eve were first united, they felt no shame. When we are united with Christ in faith, there is no shame. Martin Luther called this the Blessed Exchange:

“Faith unites the soul with Christ as a spouse with her husband. Everything which Christ has becomes the property of the believing soul; everything which the soul has becomes the property of the Christ. Christ possesses all blessings and eternal life: they are thenceforward the property of the soul. The soul has all the iniquities and sins: they become thenceforward the property of Christ. It is then a blessed exchange commences.”¹

Read back over this quote again. What does Luther say is being exchanged?

How has Christ turned hopelessness into hope in your life?

DAY 2

MORE STRIFE, BETTER BLOOD

GENESIS 4:1-16

One of the devastating results of sin entering the world is relational conflict, evidenced by hatred and even violence toward one another. We've all been there. We have fought with our parents, our friends, our coaches, and our teachers. Anger has festered in our hearts and bitterness has robbed us of our joy. Even as kids, we fought on playgrounds and sucker-punched kids we didn't like. We can be ruthless. All this began in the garden of Eden.

If only sin had stopped in the garden. But it didn't. It escalated. That's how it always works, apart from God's grace. We see this clearly just one generation after Adam and Eve's devastating choice. Their children demonstrated the devastating and natural progression of sin.

Read Genesis 4:1-16.

Cain was furious because the Lord looked with favor on Abel's offering and not on his. So despite the Lord's warning about being mastered by sin (v. 7), Cain killed his own brother.

When was the last time you let your anger take control? Rate it on a scale of 1–10, then summarize what happened in a few sentences.



Why did God not receive Cain's offering? What is really going on here? Some verses in the New Testament cast more light on the two brothers.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

HEBREWS 11:4

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another, unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

1 JOHN 3:11-12

God receiving Abel's offering and rejecting Cain's was not based on what they offered with their hands, but on the condition of their hearts. Abel offered in faith. Cain's heart was evil, and he proved his evil by killing his brother.

Is that what the world today is really like? Are things really that broken here? Genesis 4 shows us that, indeed, things are not as they were designed to be. The first son born into this world was a murderer.

Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed."

GENESIS 4:10-11

Conflict can poison our relationships. Is there a relationship in your life that's struggling under the weight of conflict? Maybe it's a coach or teacher; maybe it's a girlfriend. Fill in the blanks in these sentences:

My relationship with _____ has too much conflict.

To make things better, I can _____ and _____.

But I also need them to _____.

God, help me to _____.

Cain's sinful rage caused him to spill the blood of his brother, and that blood condemned him. But by God's grace, we have a rescue from this sin, from this hatred. The New Testament tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks a better word—a different word—than the blood of Abel.

...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the blood of Abel.

HEBREWS 12:24

Both Jesus and Abel were innocent and killed by sinful and hateful men. But their spilled blood speaks different messages. The blood of Abel spoke against Cain; the blood of Christ speaks for us. The blood of Abel condemned Cain; the blood of Jesus forgives and justifies us.

We have been like Cain. We have hated, been angry, acted cruelly, and held bitterness and jealousy in our hearts. Thankfully, Jesus' blood speaks a better word.

We are not condemned. As Jesus' blood fell to the ground, our liberation and salvation were secured. We are not sent to wander the land, but are welcomed to Him.

Every guy gets angry. But if you let your anger take control, your witness for Christ—and your relationships—will suffer. If you've not repented for your anger, take time now to do so. Then, thank God that the blood of Christ has rescued us from condemnation for our sins.

DAY 3

COSMIC REBOOT

GENESIS 6–9

The space allocated in the Bible to the account of Noah (four chapters) indicates it is a significant event in the story God is telling. When you read the first six chapters of Genesis, you may think, *Wow, that escalated quickly*. In Genesis 2, everything is perfect. God had created everything, declared it to be good, and told Adam and Eve to multiply and steward creation. They enjoyed God and each other in perfect harmony. There was no shame, no sin, no pain, and no death.

Then Adam and Eve rebelled, and their cosmic rebellion had an impact on everything. We still feel the effects today. Adam represents all of us, for all of us have sinned. The image of God is still in us, but it is distorted.

Look up some synonyms for the word *distorted*. What does it mean for the image of God to be distorted in us?

Following the sin of Cain, who murdered his brother, sin spread rampantly. And already by Genesis 6, God had had enough.

When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved. Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them." Noah, however, found favor in the sight of the LORD.

GENESIS 6:5-8

Noah was not a perfect man, but God expressed grace to him and his family. Noah did not earn God's favor, but rather God graciously gave it to him. You likely know the story: God told Noah to build a massive ark out of wood, so he and his family could be saved from the floodwaters that would destroy the whole earth. Noah and his family took pairs of animals and birds on the ark with them so that life would continue once the flood was over (Gen. 7:1-10).

The flood was absolutely devastating. Read the passage below, circling all the living things the Scripture says were destroyed by the flood.

The mountains were covered as the waters surged above them more than twenty feet. Every creature perished—those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind. Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils—everything on dry land died. He wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the earth, from mankind to livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.

GENESIS 7:20-23

Sin violates God's holy character and must be punished, yet God is also loving and gracious. So to both punish sin and pardon people, God poured out His wrath through a flood while simultaneously using Noah and an ark to rescue people.

How do we see the picture of Christ illustrated in this story?

Centuries later Jesus came to be our pardon. Just as Noah saved his entire family from the just wrath of God, Jesus saved His family—those who believe in Him—from the punishment for sin.

After Noah and his family were saved and left the ark, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to God.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, He said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of human beings, even though the inclination of the human heart is evil from his youth onward. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done."

GENESIS 8:20-22

God made a covenant with Noah and promised to never flood the whole earth again. This is the first time we see covenant used in God's story. A covenant is an agreement backed with a promise.

"But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it." Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, "Understand that I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you—birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you—all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

GENESIS 9:7-13

Though hurricanes, tsunamis, and other disastrous effects of a fallen and broken world will still strike, the whole earth will never be flooded again. Every time we see a rainbow, we can remember that we have a God who keeps His promises.

As you close today, reread Genesis 9:7 and notice the command God gave Noah. God restated the command "Be fruitful and multiply," which He first gave to Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 1:28). God flooded the earth because of our sin, but He did not give up on humanity. He gave them a new start and continued to pursue them. Just as He continues to pursue us. Just as He continues to pursue you.

What evidence in your life shows that God has not given up on you?

DAY 4

GOOD THINGS FOR THE WRONG REASONS

GENESIS 11:1-9

Just as God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply over the whole earth, He told Noah to do the same. But instead of multiplying and spreading over the whole earth, humanity chose to cluster together. Chronologically, the story of the tower of Babel fits sometime in the middle of Genesis 10—which gives us an account of the people who filled the earth. Before the people spread out speaking their own languages (Gen. 10:5), the following event took place.

The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let us make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.) And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth." Then the LORD came down to look over the city and the tower that the humans were building. The LORD said, "If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let's go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech." So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city. Therefore it is called Babylon, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

GENESIS 11:1-9

Why did the people in Shinar want to build the tower to heaven? Why did God want to destroy it?

The people in this story wanted community, security, and identity. They wanted the community of a city. They wanted the security of a tower that would protect them from others. And they wanted their identity to come from a name for themselves. They wanted good things for the wrong reasons and by the wrong means. Every man wants a secure future, people who love him, and a purpose for his life. It's not wrong to want these things. But these guys wanted this for their own glory, and they were going to earn it themselves.

How have you tried to make a name for yourself in the wrong ways? What were the consequences of your actions?

When we build ourselves up, we go back to the root beneath Adam and Eve's sin. We say that we want to be the ones who decide what is good and evil. We want to be in charge. So God divided the people into multiple languages and "scattered them throughout the earth" (Gen. 11:8). Their desire to achieve community, security, and identity apart from God was halted. The people were also pushed outward, spread across the land as God commanded (Gen. 1:28; 9:7).

All this was in God's plan. Today, He doesn't receive worship in just one language, but many languages. And when His story concludes, He will be worshiped by people from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev. 5:9-10).

As we move forward to the next session, Genesis 12 will show us that God was going to bless all the nations through one man—a man willing to leave his community, his security, and his identity. He trusted God for all three instead of foolishly attempting to earn them on his own.

How have you found community in Christ? What about security? What about your identity?