

God's Epic Story

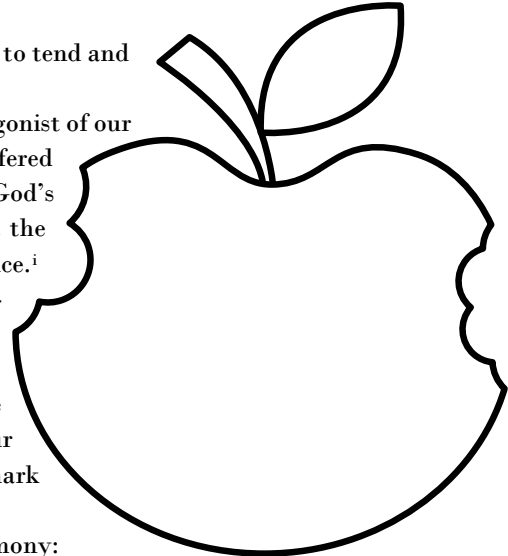
Before there was anything, there was God.^a Then He spoke, and His words became reality.^b His story was perfect. Man and woman existed in perfect harmony, image-bearers of their creator, God.^c

In His story, we lived in perfect relationship with all things:

- **We lived in harmony with God**, walking and speaking with Him openly.^d
- **We lived in harmony with one another**, “naked and unashamed” because we had nothing to hide.^e
- **We lived in harmony with ourselves**, understanding our role as image bearers and free of shame, guilt, pain, or heartache.^f
- **We lived in harmony with nature**; our role in the story was to tend and care for the world.^g

But, like every epic story, this was only a beginning. The antagonist of our story came and made us question if life was truly perfect. Satan offered Adam and Eve a choice: to continue trusting in the goodness of God's story or to take control and rewrite the story with themselves at the center.^h They chose self, and we have been doing the same ever since.ⁱ

We reach for self-preservation rather than love and self-gratification rather than sacrifice. It is this desire to establish our identity and worth in what we define as good, apart from a relationship with our Maker, that the Bible calls idolatry. A simple definition of idolatry is the worship of created things rather than our Creator God.^j Idolatry always results in sin, meaning we miss the mark of God's design.^k



Sin destroys the four relationships God created in perfect harmony:

- **Sin strips us of intimacy with God.**^l His perfection cannot be with sin; his holiness would utterly destroy us. We live separated from God now and without hope or rest in the afterlife, forever separated from the Giver of all good things.^m
- **Sin steals our peace with one another** as we jostle and compete for the leading role in this story.ⁿ Nations rage and war with one another.^o Individuals lie, cheat, steal, abuse, and use one another in our constant need for more.^p
- **Sin destroys our relationship with ourselves.** Because we cannot measure up to our design, as bearers of God's image, we ache with a longing we cannot understand or satisfy. We try in vain to fill the insatiable void within us with sex, drugs, food, social media, money, or anything else we can get our hands on. What promises to satisfy only leaves us broken, ashamed, and empty.^q
- **Sin corrupts nature**; our world is no longer a paradise.^r We destroy creation by fighting to be at the center of the story. Instead of cultivating the world God created for us, we mishandle, exploit, strip of resources, and destroy nature in our insatiable quest for more.^s

There is still hope. God spoke in the garden, in the moment of our original sin, of His promised champion.^t He sent prophets and teachers throughout the Old Testament to prepare our hearts for His coming Messiah.^u Then He did the unthinkable: He stepped into the brokenness of our story.

God became human, as Jesus of Nazareth. He stripped away His own divinity, humbled Himself to don human flesh, and lived among us in our broken world.^v He loves us so much,^w and wants us to know His love personally, so the Creator of all things took on a body susceptible to pain, heartache, brokenness, and death.^x

^a Genesis 1:1a

^b Genesis 1:3

^c Genesis 1:27

^d Genesis 1:28-30, 2:15-17

^e Genesis 2:25

^f Genesis 2:25

^g Genesis 2:15

^h Genesis 3:4-5

ⁱ Genesis 3:6

^j Romans 1:22-25

^k Romans 3:23

^l Genesis 3:8b-10

^m Isaiah 59:2

ⁿ Genesis 3:7

^o James 4:1-2

^p Romans 1:28-32

^q Galatians 5:19-21

^r Genesis 3:17b-18

^s Romans 8:20-22

^t Genesis 3:15b

^u John 5:39-40

^v John 1:15

^w John 3:16-17

^x Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus modeled for us what a true image-bearer looks like. He showed us how to live in perfect relationship with God, each other, ourselves, and nature. He taught us to pray for God’s kingdom to come to earth and showed us how to live out His work of restoration.

Then He went further. After living the perfect life we cannot live, he took on the death we each deserve.^a Jesus became like us so that we could become like Him.^b After a sinless life,^c He swapped places with us, dying a brutal death on a Roman cross.^d In His sacrifice, He paid the debt we could never pay^e and purchased for us the eternal life that we do not deserve.^f

But death had no right to Jesus and could not hold Him long. In the ultimate plot twist, Jesus wrested the keys of hell from death and rose from the grave.^g Through His death, we find forgiveness for our sin. In His resurrection, we receive the power to restore the brokenness that sin brought into the world.

God does not force this choice on any of us.^h Jesus paid the debt; we must choose to accept His gift of freedom and salvation. In doing so, He reconnects our hearts to the heart of our Creator, and we become new beings.ⁱ We have no role in our salvation;^j it’s not about the good works we can do.^k We bring our brokenness to Him and He makes us whole.^l

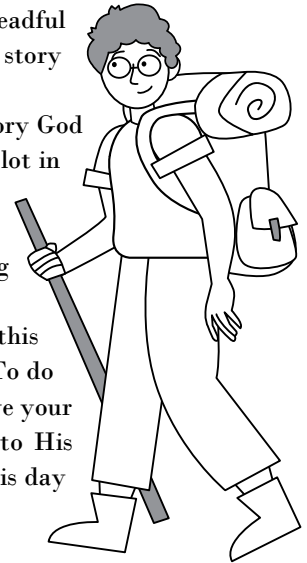
From our new identity, through the power of the Holy Spirit, He empowers us to join in God’s work of reconciliation:^m

- **We have restored intimacy with God.**ⁿ Jesus strips away the sin separating us from God, allowing us to live in harmony with God and look forward to an eternity in His presence.^o We work to restore others to relationship with God by sharing this Good News.^p
- **We have peace with one another.**^q No longer in competition for the role of protagonist, we encourage, support, and collaborate with one another. Considering God’s forgiveness, we forgive others.^r This mosaic of generations, ethnicities, and cultures finds unified purpose in His story of reconciliation.^s
- **We live at peace with ourselves.**^t We are no longer left wallowing in condemnation and shame, seeking something to fill the void inside. God wiped our slate clean and empowers us to imitate Jesus in living as image-bearers of the divine God.^u
- **We restore nature.** We recognize our responsibility to steward God’s creation and collaborate to restore, nurture, and care for the natural world.^v

The Good News of the Gospel is not that God will snatch us away from this dreadful place called earth. The Good News is that, through His people, God is telling a new story that is restoring our world right now.

Throughout the 30 days of Writing Your Story With God we examined the story God is writing with your life. When we zoom out, we realize your story is only one subplot in the epic adventure that He is writing in the World. This is His story of redemption, of old things becoming new, and of dead things coming back to life. This is the story of you, His image-bearing creation, realizing who He created you to be and partnering with Him to live your purpose of restoring humanity to God’s original design.

The Author of the greatest story ever told is inviting you to play a part in this unfolding plot of redemption. However, it is your choice to accept this invitation. To do so, simply cry out, “Jesus, rescue me.”^w Confess your need for Jesus’ death to forgive your sins and His resurrection to empower your restoration. Jump wholeheartedly into His mission of reconciliation and choose to make Him the Author of your story from this day forward.^x



^a 1 Corinthians 15:22

^b 2 Corinthians 5:21

^c Hebrews 4:15

^d Romans 6:23

^e Isaiah 53:5-6

^f Romans 5:12,18-19

^g 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

^h John 3:36

ⁱ 2 Corinthians 5:17

^j Romans 5:8

^k 2 Timothy 1:9

^l Ephesians 2:8-9

^m 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

ⁿ Romans 8:38-39

^o Ephesians 2:14-16

^p Matthew 28:19-20

^q Luke 6:27-28

^r Ephesians 4:31-32

^s Galatians 3:27-28

^t 1 John 1:9

^u Romans 8:1-2

^v Mark 16:15

^w Romans 10:9-10

^x Learn more about God’s epic story:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7H38SxVUvImTwb2_0iwkH59cIGJQqiJg