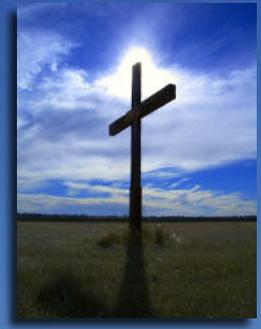


The **STORY** *of* **REDEMPTION**



God Reaching Out to Restore **COMMUNITY**
through the cross of Jesus Christ



**IS THIS THE WORLD
GOD INTENDED?**

Part 1: Creation

Note: For instructions on how to best use and lead this study, please go to www.StoryofRedemption.com.

- Download free .pdfs of each lesson!
- Watch videos of those who have gone through the study!
- Order additional copies of the Story of Redemption!

For missional and evangelistic resources, including teaching materials, seminars, videos, blogs, and more, go to www.MissionalOutreachNetwork.com.

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The **STORY** of Redemption

Is This the World God Intended?

PART 1: CREATION

When we are seeking God, there are many questions that come to mind. Some of these questions might include:

- Who is God, and what is he like?
- Where do we come from? Why do we exist?
- If there is a God, why does my life & the world seem so messed up?
- Does God have a plan for my life?

In the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, these questions are addressed. The first three chapters tell the story of God and his creation.



“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

1. IN THE BEGINNING.

The Bible begins with the following words:

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day (Gen. 1:1-5).

Many people use scientific ideas like evolution or the Big Bang Theory to explain how we came to be on this earth. But do these ideas ultimately explain where this world came from? Evolution begins with an earth, a sea, and a ready-made soup of amino acids. The Big Bang Theory begins with space and a super-heated ball of mass and energy. Science can tell us a lot, but both evolution and the Big Bang Theory assume creation. They do not tell how the universe—the earth, the sea, space, etc.—originally came into existence.

The universe also is so wondrous that many instantly feel inspired and drawn to God when out in nature. And life is so intricate that even atheistic scientists have said that life appears to be designed. One, Richard Dawkins, theorizes that perhaps aliens seeded the earth. But where did the aliens come from?

Ultimately, people usually come to one of two conclusions. The first is to say that the universe has always existed. But if the universe had always been in existence, would not the sun and stars have run out of energy? Surely they would burn out, and then all life would die. The other option is that the universe was created. If this is true, then does this not point towards a creator? Surveys consistently show the overwhelming majority of Americans choose the second

option, with 85-90% believing in some type of higher power. The Bible says this creator is God, who made the universe and all that is in it.

You may still have questions about the universe. You may also wonder which faith system is real--Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, the New Age movement, or Christianity. The Internet and our global economy have brought all kinds of people, faiths, and ideas together. But let's examine the biblical account and see if it "rings true" to our experience and makes sense of the world as we know it.



When God created the world, "it was good."

According to the Genesis account, God created:

- The land and the seas (Gen. 1:9-10).
- The plants and the trees (Gen. 1:11).
- The sun and the moon (Gen. 1:14-18).
- The creatures of the sea and the birds (Gen. 1:20-21).
- The animals (Gen. 1:24-25).

Each time God created something, "God saw that it was good."

What evidence do you see that points toward a Creator of the universe?

2. GOD CREATED HUMANITY.

On the sixth day, God would create something that he would say was "very good." That something was humanity:

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26-27).

The first male and female were named Adam and Eve.

Why did God create humans? He created us because God is a loving God, and he wanted a people to love--much like a happily married couple will choose to share the love that they have for each other by having a child. When God created Adam and Eve, he gave them many great gifts:

- **God made them together in his image (Gen. 1:28).** This means that God originally created humanity to be like him--good, loving, holy, and communal, with the ability to think, feel, decide, and create. Just think of all of the incredible things that humanity has discovered and made, from medicine to cell phones to nuclear physics.
- **God gave them a mission to rule with him over the earth (Gen. 1:28-30).** This dominion included all of the plants and animals. Care for the environment is a major responsibility and a God given impulse. God created Adam and Eve to co-rule with him over creation.
- **God put them in the Garden of Eden.** There God provided them with all of their needs. Adam was put in the Garden to work it, giving him purpose.

- **They lived in close community with God and each other (Gen. 3:8).** There was nothing that interfered with their relationship with God or each other (symbolized by nakedness). God walked and talked with them, and they shared in his presence. There was love, peace, and joy in this community.

This was God’s original intention for us, and this was how it was in the beginning.
How does the world today compare to what is pictured in the Garden of Eden?

3. THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD & EACH OTHER WAS DESTROYED.

God gave Adam and Eve all of these gifts, and he only had one prohibition.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Gen. 2:16-17).

By setting this boundary, God made clear that despite all of their incredible gifts and almost godlike powers (they were made in God’s image), they were not God. They needed God, just as children need their parents. But Adam and Eve would assert their independence from God, sinning (to sin is to fail to trust God and do his will) and disobeying this simple command. In this they would be helped by Satan, who took the form of a serpent.

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:1-5).



Community was lost in the Garden when Adam & Eve failed to trust God.

Eve believed the serpent’s lies, and she ate the fruit. She gave the fruit to Adam, who also ate of it. On that day they died spiritually, as their disobedience severed their innocent relationship to God. They realized that they were naked, and they were ashamed. Now when God walked in the garden, rather than being filled with joy, they were afraid and tried to hide (Gen. 3:8-10).

When God asked Adam if he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, he said, *“The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (3:12).* Adam now blamed Eve--the woman he had previously called “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23). Sin had destroyed their relationship with both God and each other. Community was lost that day in the Garden.

Where do people today try to find a sense of community outside of God? How effective is this? How does sin affect our relationships today?

4. THERE WAS PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.

Part of God's loving nature is holiness. To be holy is to be set apart, free from sin, which destroys loving relationships. To protect these relationships, God must punish sin. He does not enjoy this task, any more than a parent enjoys punishing a disobedient child. And yet, he cannot allow sin to go unchecked and let us destroy our lives.

After listening to Adam blame Eve for his sin, and Eve blame the serpent for her sin, God dealt out the following punishments.

- **The serpent would crawl on his belly (Gen. 3:14-15).** There would also be hostility between him and the woman, symbolic of the struggle between humans and Satan.
- **The woman would have greater pains in childbearing (Gen. 3:16).** In addition, her desire would be for her husband, and he would now rule over her.
- **The man would have to work much harder to get food out of the ground (Gen. 3:17-19).** The ground itself was cursed, and it would no longer easily produce food. Instead, the ground would be filled with thorns and thistles.
- **Adam and Eve could no longer stay in the Garden (Gen. 3:22-24).** God "drove the man out," and he placed cherubim (angels) and a flaming sword on the east side of the Garden to guard the entrance.



The world was changed dramatically by sin.

Understanding the consequences of sin can help us answer some of life's toughest questions, including:

Why is there death and disease in the world?
Why do storms and natural disasters sometimes take people's lives?
Why do we see divorce, dishonesty, and murder in the world?

God never intended a world with violence and death.

Some of these things happen because the world was dramatically changed when sin entered into the world. The curse of the ground was merely symbolic of the larger consequences of sin. At that time, chaotic forces were unleashed into the world, including earthquakes, tornadoes, cancer, and death.

Some of these things happen because God has given us, like Adam and Eve, the freedom to obey or disobey him. Freewill cannot exist without the possibility that it may be abused. Many today use their freedom to hurt other people.

This is the world in which we find ourselves—but this is not the world that God originally intended. God never intended a world with cancer, violence, or death. These are the enemies of God, and one day they will no longer exist.

How does understanding God's original intent for creation help us in wanting to follow God?

5. GOD STILL CARED FOR HIS CREATION.

Despite Adam and Eve's sin, God never stopped loving and caring for them. Two things point towards his continuing love and care. First, although God drove them out of the Garden, he "made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). By clothing them, God covered up the shame that had resulted from their sin. The clothing that he gave them also helped protect them from the weather. Thus, God did not abandon Adam and Eve. Instead, he continued to provide for them.

Second, God had a plan to restore his relationship with humanity. God said that one of the woman's offspring would "crush" the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). This prophecy would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ, who would deal Satan a crushing blow by destroying the power of sin through his death on the cross.

What is the story of redemption? **The story** is the story of how God has worked throughout history to accomplish his plan of redemption. **Redemption** is blessing or freedom that has been bought with a price. The price that was required to redeem us and bring us back into community with God and others was the death of Jesus, the Son of God.

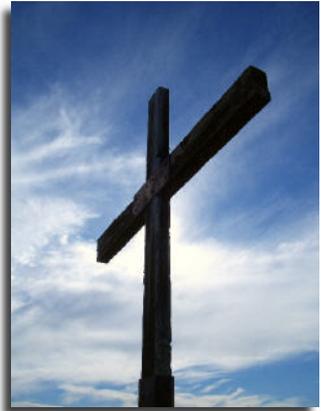
This redemption makes possible many blessings, including:

- *Forgiveness of sins.*
- *Elimination of the tendency and desire to sin.*
- *Elimination of death and disease.*
- *Elimination of pain and suffering.*
- *Restoration of the world to the peace, beauty, and harmony of the Garden of Eden.*
- *Restoration of close community with God and one another through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit.*

How do these blessings sound? Do you want to grow closer to God and form lifelong, authentic relationships with other people? Then continue on in this study as we learn more about God's wonderful plan of redemption. God has reached out to us to heal the brokenness of life. **Through his Son, God can restore the community with God and others which we so long for in our lives.**

Which one of these blessings sounds most attractive to you?

In the next part of the story, we will learn more about the type of God that God is as the *Story of Redemption* unfolds.



God sent his Son to purchase our redemption and restore community with him and the rest of humanity.

Part I: Creation

www.StoryofRedemption.com



The **STORY** of
REDEMPTION

QUESTIONS:

Fill in the Blank.

1. When God created the heavens and the earth, he saw that it was “_____.”
2. When God created humanity, he said that it was “_____.”
3. God made Adam and Eve to _____ over the earth.
4. After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they realized that they were naked and they felt _____.
5. Adam and Eve sinned by failing to _____ God.
6. The offspring of the woman who would crush the serpent’s head is _____.
7. God showed that he still cared for Adam and Eve even after he drove them out of the Garden by making _____ for them.

True/False.

8. _____ God made male and female together in the image of God.
9. _____ Death and disease are some of the consequences of sin.
10. _____ God originally created the world with cancer, war, and death in mind.
11. _____ Redemption is blessing or freedom bought at a price.
12. _____ The death of Jesus was the price required to purchase our redemption.

Discovery Bible Study - Make three columns on a piece of paper In column 1, write out the following verse. In column 2, write the verse in your own words. In column 3, write out how you will apply this verse this week.

“⁴For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

For Further Study: *What do you learn about God & goodness from these passages? (Note: The Bible is divided into books, chapters, and verses. The location/page # of the books, like “Genesis” or “Matthew,” can be found in the front of a Bible concordance.)*

Matthew 6:9-11 _____

Matthew 12:33-35 _____

Psalms 19:1-2 _____

Psalms 100:1-4 _____

James 1:17-18 _____

To receive answers to the above questions, learn more about Discovery Bible Study, or receive the next part of the Story, go to www.StoryofRedemption.com or see your study leader.

Place an address label here with contact information for those wanting further study.