WEEK 1: BEGINNINGS & SEPARATION

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Big Picture

This is where we're going… the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- God is Holy and Creator
- Humans created in His image—*Imago Dei*
- Humans created to live forever
- Humans given volition/choice to trust God or self
- Humans rebel and are cast out of garden & God's presence
- Humans were never created to determine/judge good & evil for themselves. This is God's sole authority.
- God pursues rebellious humans
- Missionary Identity/Missionary God

Set the Training Tone

Especially this first week, spend some time setting up the right atmosphere for dialogues which will foster growth.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community)
- Have fun, keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (let's give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in his Story!

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THE STORY & DIALOGUE

Pre-Story Setup

Does it seem to you that things are working perfectly in the world today? Are things the way that they seem like they should be? Have you ever wondered why? What is wrong with the world? As we begin to look deeper into the Story of God and humans and this world, we will see that everything did not start out bad, in fact things were amazing and beautiful!

> **Alternately… ask this question:**
> If you could imagine the world the way it should be, what would it be like?
> There was a day when the world was very much like you described… and a day when it will be again.

What if we could live in a world where there was no sickness or pain or death? No pollution, poverty, war or hatred? Is it possible that the world that we all want, what we all dream of, is exactly the world that God originally created and intended for us?! And what if God actually has a plan and a way to set everything right again? The Bible shows us that there is such a way…Let's start at the beginning of The Story…

Scene 1 ~ Beginnings

Story from Genesis 1-3, Job 38, Isaiah 14, Revelation 12

This story is found in the Bible, and is about God, a being that was before all things, and created this earth and everything on it. God *alone* always does what is good and right and perfect—the Bible calls him holy.

While God was creating the foundations of the earth, angels watched with amazement, singing together and shouting for joy! God created these beautiful angels to worship him. But some of these angels rebelled against God and his ways – any rebellion against God is called sin. God will not allow sin to remain in his presence, so he sent the rebellious angels into darkness on the earth, to face final punishment later.

(Pause for a moment…)

Scene 2 ~ First Humans

Story from Genesis 1-2, Psalm 8

Then God decided he would create another being, one that was lower than the angels, called a human. So God took the earth and prepared it as a place for humans to live. His Spirit moved over the surface of the earth as…

He made light–separating it from the darkness…
He divided the oceans and the sky…
He gathered the waters–so dry land would appear…
He grew plants, flowers, and trees with seeds to reproduce themselves…
He created the sun, the moon and the stars–setting the days and seasons in to motion…
He filled the seas with fish, the sky with birds, and the earth with all kinds of wild animals!

God put great care and creativity into all of his creation, Then he looked at everything and said, *"This is good!"*

After he had prepared the earth God said, *"Let us make humans in our image, to be like us. They will be in charge of the earth and the plants and the animals that live on it."*

So God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed his own breath into him, giving him life. This man would be called Adam.

Later, God created the first woman, Eve, from one of Adam's ribs, to be a companion and helper for Adam. So God created both the man and the woman in his own image.

God blessed the man and the woman with the ability to continue creating through having children. He told them, *"Be fruitful and multiply."* He placed the humans in a beautiful garden, a place where they had everything they needed to live life to the fullest.

In the center of the garden God placed two special trees. One was the Tree of Life and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil. God said that Adam and Eve could eat from any tree in the garden, except for one—the tree that would give them knowledge of good and evil. He warned them not to eat from this tree or they would surely die…

Daily, God would come and spend time with the humans, walking with them in the cool of the day. He showed them how to live in the best possible way—a life lived close to God and under his protection—a life that is full and complete. And Adam and Eve loved being with God.

As God looked over all of his creation he thought, *"this is VERY GOOD!"* After creating all of this God rested, and he set aside a day of rest each week for his creation.

Scene 1 & 2 Dialogue ~ Beginnings & First Humans

*Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.*

1. **How did God make humans unique among his creations?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *They were made in God's image—this is known as Imago Dei!*
   - *He breathed his own breath into Adam.*
   - *He was given authority to rule over the garden and all the animals.*

2. **How do we know humans were created good?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *They were made in God's image!*
   - *God declared them "Excellent."*

3. **Who do you view yourself to be? What makes up your identity? (roles, family, abilities, occupation?) How important are these things on making up your identity?**

4. **Be honest… what "identity" in your life currently provides the most powerful dose of self-worth?**

5. ⊟ **What would change if our identity depended on the Imago Dei for our worth?**

⊟ ***[Resting Slide]***

6. **What kind of relationship did God have with the humans?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *He spent time with Adam and Eve. They loved being with God.*
   - *He gave them responsibility–to care for God's creation and to create.*
   - *He showed them the best possible way to live.*
   - *He protected them from evil.*
   - *They loved being with God. He gave them the ability to choose.*

7. **What kind of relationship did Adam & Eve have with each other?**
   You may need to guide the discussion toward:
   - *Close, Eve came out of Adam's body.*
   - *Naked and unashamed.*

8. **What do you think is significant about the two trees in the center of the garden?**

9. **Do you think that humans were created to live forever? What shows us this in the Story?**

10. **What do we learn about God in this scene?**
    You may need to guide the discussion toward:
    - *God is the source of all blessing…*
    - *God is all powerful. God is the creator of all things*
    - *God created humans in his image.*
    - *God showed the humans how to live in the best possible way.*
    - *God trusts humans with the care of his creation.*
    - *God gives humans the ability to create.*
    - *God provides and takes care of humans–the garden had everything they needed.*
    - *God enjoys his creation–he said it was excellent in every way!*
    - *God sets aside time for rest!*

11. ⊟ **What do we know so far about the meaning of life? Why are we here?**
    Be sure to direct folks back to the Story for their answers!

12. **If this story does not center on us (but on God) how do we find our purpose to life? What are humans doing with him in the story?**
    You may need to guide the discussion toward:
    - *Enjoying and learning from God—spending time with him and living in his ways.*

13. **How does that contrast to the way people think in our culture?**
    This question should be allowed to create some tension here…

Scene 3 ~ Separation

Story from Genesis 1-3

One day, a serpent—the most clever of all the animals in the garden—came to the woman. He asked Eve, *"Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?"*

Eve told him, *"No, we can eat from any tree in the garden. It's only the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that we are not allowed to eat from—or even touch, or we will die."*

The serpent said to her, *"You won't die! God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God—knowing everything, both good and evil."*

When Eve saw how good and delicious the fruit looked, and that it would make her wise, she took some of it and ate it. She also gave some to Adam, her husband, who was with her, and he ate it! They chose not to believe God and to believe the lie. Instantly their eyes were opened and they became filled with shame and fear. They strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover their nakedness.

Toward evening they heard God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. God called to them, *"Where are you?"* Adam answered, *"I heard you coming and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."* God answered, *"Why are you ashamed of being naked? Did you eat the fruit I told you not to eat?"* Adam blamed Eve saying, *"It was the woman you gave me. She gave me some."* Then God said to Eve, *"How could you do this?"* Eve blamed the serpent saying, *"The serpent tricked me into eating the fruit."*

So God said to the snake, *"Because you have done this, You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. You will be the enemy of the woman and her children. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head."*

God's heart was broken because of their disobedience, but he could not ignore what they had done. God always does what is good, right and perfect—his perfect justice required that there be consequences for rebellion. So God punished Adam and Eve by throwing them out of the Garden outside of his care and protection. No longer following God's way, they were now subject to sickness, pain and death. God continued to love Adam and Eve—he even created clothing for them out of animal skins so they would not be ashamed outside of the Garden.

Scene 3 Dialogue ~ Separation

*Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.*

14. **How did God make humans unique among his creations?**
    You may need to guide the discussion toward:
    - *They were made in God's image – this is known as Imago Dei!*

15. **What did Adam and Eve choose to do in the story?**
    You may need to guide the discussion toward:
    - *Believe the lie of the serpent…choose to NOT trust God's words… trust in self apart from God…trust in their own abilities to manage good & evil in their lives.*

16. **What was the real temptation that Adam & Eve were presented with by the serpent?**
You may need to guide the discussion toward:
- *To choose self apart from relationship with God (pride)*
- *and to believe that we are more equipped to manage the good and evil, right and wrong in our own life.*

17. **An American Story**
Birth > School > College > Starter Job > Starter Marriage > Picket Fence > 2.5 Kids > 2nd Marriage > Secure Job > Dump Kids > Retire to Florida > Death
- **What is the motive behind this "American Story"?**
- **What is the outcome focused on?**
- **Who does this story center on—whose story is being lived out?**
- **How powerful is this story in our culture? In your experience?**
- **Do you think you can live this story and still please God?**
- **How is my version of the "American Story" different from the way God started writing The Story?**
- **Is there a way to get back to living in the "original" story? (God's Story)**

[Resting Slide]

18. **What was God's initial response to Adam right after he had disobeyed?**
You may need to guide the discussion toward:
- *God went looking for them… asked a question, "Where are you?"*

19. **Do you think that God didn't know where they were? Why did he go looking and asking questions?**

20. **What was the consequence of their actions?**
You may need to guide the discussion toward:
- *Judgment—separation from God.*
- *Relationships broken with God and each other.*
- *Sickness, pain and death*
- *Mercy. He did not destroy them and also covered their nakedness and shame.*

21. **Why do you think God required consequences for their sin and rebellion? Why didn't God just overlook their rebellion?**
- *God will never allow sin to remain in his presence. He always does good, right and perfect (Holy).*

22. **Are we like Adam and Eve or different from them?**
You may need to guide the discussion toward:
- *We are just like them.*
- *Often, despite knowing God's commands, we choose to go our own way and rebel.*
- *We manage right and wrong from our own perspective instead of from God's.*
- *We try to be our own god and displace God in our lives.*

23. **What do we learn about God in this story?**
You may need to guide the discussion toward:
- *He seems to knows all things: He knew Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree.*
- *God will never allow evil to remain in his presence: He judged each of the characters in the story. He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden, and away from his presence. He promised One who would come to kill the serpent.*
- *He keeps his promises: Although they did not die immediately, Adam and Eve's nature was changed, so God would not allow them to take from the tree of life. Also, he reminded Adam that he would return to dust.*
- *He is the source of all grace: He warned them in advance… He made clothing for them of animal skins. The innocent animals were killed on their behalf so they could have clothing/covering.*

ENDING THE DIALOGUE

Using Media
Use of songs or artwork for further discussion…

The Lust, the Flesh, the Eyes and the Pride of Life
You may want to have people just listen to the song and view the lyrics on screen as it plays, and then *hand out the sheet with all the lyrics.*

Let's listen to this song by the 77s…

24. **Which lyrics of this song's impacted you most?**

25. **What part of the Story we heard today are you reminded of?**

26. **What thoughts come to mind after hearing the 3rd verse?**

Further Application

27. **If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?**

28. **How would it affect us as a community?**

29. **How would it affect others… our neighborhood, our city?**

WALKING IT OUT
The Walking It Out handout is tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them…
point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.