

Introduction

Welcome to the Unfinished story! Each of us are people in process and it's reassuring to know we aren't alone. Together, we have a shaping influence in each others' lives as we build authentic community.

God is also with us; it's His story after all! God has promised to bring to completion the work He began in us.

Through these next five weeks, we will get a glimpse of the bigger stories going on in our lives. We will become more aware of God's leadership and love for us. We will put ourselves in a place where God, by His Spirit, can transform and change us.

It's our hope that we will look up to see our amazing Creator, the story He's been writing through time, and how you and I are an integral part of that story.

Enjoy!
Pastor Jason Stonehouse

About this Book *Five sections, one for each week*



Inside of each section you'll find a place to take notes and jot down thoughts you have while listening to the weekend sermon. Next there is a section for your thoughts on the video and questions for you to use in your group. Then there are both some personal reflections and some activities to do with kids either in your group setting or as a family.

Finally, you'll note there are two devotional thoughts (Digging Deeper) that you can complete at any point before the next weekend. These are meant to enhance our understanding and go a little deeper in the transformation process.

Do your best to not miss a week, both for the sermons and also for the group experience, as they are all uniquely crafted to maximize God's work in us these five weeks. Welcome to the story of "Unfinished"!

Attention Leaders - If your group has families with children, we would like to encourage you to do the "Family Chapter" section as a part of your small group. There will be a few simple supplies that you may need for the activity each week. Make sure you have someone look ahead for what is needed so you can be prepared for the week.



Small group guidelines

Show up

To build relationships we need to commit to attending the group meetings and being available for the group.

Have Fun

This is an official mandate! Have fun in your group! Bonds are created through fun and positive relational experiences which creates safety. If people feel safe, they'll share deeply and get as much out of the group as possible. If you're the leader or host, put "fun" on your to-do list. If you're having fun, other people will have fun too.

Join In

It is important to participate fully and be mutually invested with the members of your group. If your group gets to know you, they'll be able to support and understand you better. They will be far more equipped to pray about where God is leading you.

Be Real

An atmosphere of authenticity encourages openness and transparency among members. This is an environment where people should feel free to be themselves.

Practice Confidentiality

For authenticity to occur, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.

Show Respect

Group members should never say anything that will embarrass their spouses or other members of the group.

Share Ownership

Groups that share responsibilities have a better feel to everyone involved. If the leader is taking care of preparing, hosting, bringing food, recording prayer requests, sending reminder emails, etc., the leader is going to get overwhelmed and the group members are going to feel far less invested. As a group decide how each person is going to pitch in; working together is always better.

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God's Story

Finding your place
in the story

Weekend Message Notes

WEEK



Big Idea...



Next Steps...

Behind the story

Family Chapter (optional)

Watch DVD/Notes

I remember the first time I realized that God's Word was not individual stories but one story with many chapters, all tied together to reveal God's great love for His people. I looked at God's word in a brand new way. Throughout God's story, He reveals a complicated relationship with His people, who are struggling in their sin and separation. Yet from start to finish, the story is always pointing to God's final plan to redeem humanity and inviting us into the bigger story.

While we sometimes get caught up in our own story, missing out on His bigger story, God invites us to look up and see what He's been doing and will do. So the question is, will we see ourselves in God's story? Will you and I play a part in what God is doing?

1. *What lens do you look through when viewing life? Are you a "big picture" person or are you more detail-oriented?*

Read Revelation 21:5-6

2. *God is the Alpha. He initiates everything in our lives. How does looking at God as the Alpha change your perspective on life?*



Read Jonah 1:2-3

3. *Is there a time in your life that you ran from God? If so, how did God pursue you? What helped you to return?*

4. *Out of the 5 parts of God's Story with humanity (Creation, Fall, Purpose, Redemption, Restoration) what part do you struggle with the most to understand?*

5. *Share about the time when you first realized that Jesus died for you personally.*

6. *How "big" is God in your story on a scale of 1-10? Share your results.*

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

*"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"
"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"*

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

7. *God is the hero of our story. In Romans it says that everything is from Him, through Him, and to Him. If you believe that, what would it look like? Out of those three truths, which one is hardest to live out in your daily life?*

Talking to the Author

O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens! When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! (Psalm 8:1,3,4,9)

Father, we pray that in these few moments together You will help all of us to focus on Your greatness in a fresh and wonderful way that will cause us to stop doubting; to stop being confused about what the answer is to our problems. It is so often that we seek every possible solution except You. May You become a living, personal, vital friend to every single believer here. May we see that we need to trust You, to worship You, to honor You, to consider You in all of our ways. Thank You, Lord, for all You are going to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Group prayer requests

Unfinished reflections

Is God the end or are you the end of your story?

You are either returning to God or running from God—which one are you doing now?

How can you encourage others in your life to return to God?

Family Chapter



"We love because He first loved us." | John 4:19

Cut out a person-shape (or two or three) for each small group member out of paper. Write "God's Story" at the top a piece of butcher paper and tape it to the wall at a height kids can reach. Invite each small group member to write their names on the cutouts and tape their cutouts to the butcher paper. Spend a couple of minutes together thanking God for each person in the group. Also, encourage everyone to think of names of others who might not yet be a part of God's big family. As everyone writes these names, encourage them to write prayers for these people. Then they can tape these cutouts to the butcher paper also.

Borrowed from: TruResources Summer 2016 Lesson 12

Digging deeper into the story ← Sin

We tend to think of sin as an action or set of actions. We “commit” sin; it’s something we do. While that is true, we also understand that sin is a state of being. We can be “living in sin” or we can be “dead in our sin,” and then there’s the whole business of a sin “nature.” This points to the fact that people are not basically good, but there is sin at our core. Some unbelievers have become very adept at “sin management,” but we must realize that sin has pervasively impacted the entire human race - no one is sinless. Sin and our “fallen nature” has impacted even more than the human race - the very world we live in experiences the effects of the fall. One does not need to travel far to see how much sin has impacted our world, both in culture and in nature. It impacts our thoughts, our actions, and is often seen most clearly in our interactions with others. Think over your life this past month or year and jot down a few of the impacts of sin on your life and relationships (either sin committed by you or by others towards you):

What are some common ways we try to “manage” sin apart from God (in our own strength and ingenuity)?

Even as a believer and follower of Jesus, we are likely to still sin. What are a few godly strategies (i.e. depending on God’s strength) can you think of that will limit sin’s impact in your life and the life of others?

(Prayer, confession, asking for other’s forgiveness, pursuing accountability and godly relationships are just a few ways you can add to your list.)

Digging deeper into the story

Redemption
↑

When you think about “redemption” you learn a lot about the heart of God. In order to provide mankind with the opportunity for free will and choice, we were given the freedom to sin, rebel, and flee from God. Even though we chose that path, God would not be deterred; His design and plan would be fulfilled and the opportunity to choose life would once again be ours. When Jesus arrived, He was on a mission to “redeem” mankind. His death and subsequent resurrection provided the necessary means by which we could choose to apply His redemption. What does God’s plan and implementation of redemption teach you about God and His character?

God’s redemption and our application of it in our lives provides us with incredible potential to become who God originally intended us to be. Read 2 Corinthians 5 and answer the following questions:

What do you learn about the life of a redeemed person?

What is a redeemed person now invited to do/be?

Think about your own life. What specifically does God invite you to do more of to live out your redemption and purpose?

