

LESSON SUMMARY (Have someone in your group read the summary section.)

The Bible contains an Upper Story and a Lower Story. The Upper Story tells the big picture, the grand narrative of God seeking relationship with mankind as it unfolds throughout history. The Lower Story contains the details of particular people, the episodes we've become familiar with: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the flood, etc. This Upper Story is really a framework around which we approach and apply any one part of the Bible. It unifies God's whole message to us and helps guide us through the hard times in life by doing two things:

- a) reminding us of God's eternal, long-range plan and,
- b) putting our experiences into a divine context formed by a perfect Creator.

For example, without the "Upper Story", a lost job could be seen as an event without hope. But put into the context of the larger chronicle of our lives, and God's perfect design, that lost job can be seen in a very different light, perhaps as an opportunity for God to reveal something better.

So, by putting all we read into the larger picture, we can make modern-day application from the Bible that takes into account the grand, mysterious ways of God, and guards us from misapplications that can result from an isolated "what this verse says to me" approach. In other words, the Upper Story creates the context for the Lower Story.

At our church we want to use *The Story* to help everyone gain a better understanding of the big picture of the Bible and to better understand God's redemptive plan for us today. As we journey together through *The Story* we will take note of both the temporal events and characters (Lower Story), as well as the eternal purpose of God: to restore and build a relationship with His creation.

Icebreaker Question: Who in your life has been the most influential in your spiritual journey? Why?

[Select the questions that best fit the needs of your group. Additional questions can be found in *The Story*, pp. 473-487.)

1. Has your experience with studying and learning the Bible been fulfilling or frustrating? Why?
2. Do you have a favorite Bible story or Bible character? What is it about the story or character that most fascinates or resonates with you?
3. The Bible has been attacked by skeptics for centuries. A July 9, 2008, headline reads, "Dead Sea tablet casts doubt on death and resurrection of Jesus." The DaVinci Code is on the national bestseller list for weeks. Other religious groups declare that the Bible is full of inconsistencies and is therefore untrustworthy. How have similar experiences impacted your personal trust in the Bible?
4. List a benefit (or two) that you expect to personally experience from going through *The Story* this year. How do you think our church as a whole will benefit?

CLOSING PRAYER