

THE BIBLE STORYLINE and your part in it...

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A. ILLUSTRATION:

Imagine being asked to come on stage and participate in a play. You are not told the storyline or your part in the play. That is how many believers live their Christian life.

The stage speaks of the world you live in, and the storyline speaks of God's plan and purpose for humanity and the world He created. You are not just a spectator but an integral part of God's plan and purpose.

Our goal:

- To understand the Bible Storyline (narrative).
- To understand God's unfolding Plan and Purpose for humanity.
- To understand how you fit into God's Story.

B. OUTCOMES: WHAT I WANT FOR YOU!

1. Freedom Experienced.
2. Fruitfulness Increased.
3. Faith Activated.
4. Future Hope.
5. Fellowship with God Unhindered.
6. Focus - Intentional Living.

As we go through this 4-part preaching series, I pray that you will boldly say: ***"Wow! Is this what God has done and purposed for me?"***

I trust that the following six outcomes will be your portion as you grow in revelation of what God has done and purposed for you.

1. Freedom Experienced

In Christ, you are set free from the power of sin, the Law, condemnation, and Satan's controlling tactics. You can experience this freedom daily, empowering you to live victoriously.

- **John 8:31-32** ESV *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*
- **John 8:36** ESV *So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*
- **Galatians 5:1** NLT *So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.*
- **Romans 8:1** ESV *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

- **Colossians 1:13-14** NLT *For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

2. Fruitfulness Increased

As you abide in Christ and align your life with God's design and plan, your life will bear much fruit, proving you are a follower of Jesus, who glorifies God.

- **John 15:8** ESV *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*
- **John 15:16** ESV *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*
- **Colossians 1:9-10** NLT *So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honour and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.*

3. Faith Activated

You activate your faith by trusting God, accepting His plan and purpose for humanity, and receiving every good thing given to you by the work of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, you release your faith through your words and actions.

- **Romans 1:16-17** NLT *For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."*
- **Romans 10:17** NLT *So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.*

4. Future Hope

The Bible tells us that Jesus will return in all His glory, and every eye will see Him. Living with this expectation aligns our hearts with God's eternal promises. It impacts the way we live today. We begin to see beyond the temporary troubles and trials and instead focus on the eternal joy and peace that awaits us. This hope is an anchor for our souls, keeping us steady even when the storms of life rage around us. It reminds us that no matter what happens, God is in control and has a perfect plan for us.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** ESV *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*
- **Titus 2:11-14** ESV *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us*

from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- **Colossians 1:19-23** ESV *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

5. Fellowship with God Unhindered

Now that you know that you have been made righteous through Jesus Christ and that the veil that separated you from God has been removed, you have free access to your heavenly Father, fully expressing your priesthood.

- **1 Corinthians 1:9** ESV *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*
- **1 Peter 2:4-5** ESV *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
- **1 John 1:1-4** TPT *We saw him with our very own eyes. We gazed upon him and heard him speak. Our hands actually touched him, the one who was from the beginning, the Living Expression of God. This Life-Giver was made visible and we have seen him. We testify to this truth: the eternal Life-Giver lived face-to-face with the Father and has now dawned upon us. So we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard about this Life-Giver so that we may share and enjoy this life together. For truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus, the Anointed One. We are writing these things to you because we want to release to you our fullness of joy.*

6. Focus: Intentional Living

Now that you know God's will for your life, yield to it and live for His glory—let His will be done! Trust God for wisdom to make Godly decisions.

- **Matthew 6:9-10** ESV *Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*
- **Romans 12:1-2** NLT *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*
- **1 Peter 1:13-15** TPT *So then, prepare your hearts and minds for action! Stay alert and fix your hope firmly on the marvelous grace that is coming to you. For when Jesus Christ is unveiled, a greater measure of grace will be released to you. As God's obedient children, never again shape your lives by the desires that you followed when you didn't know better. Instead, shape your lives to become like the Holy One who called you.*

C. THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Paul calls for the church elders in Ephesus to meet him in the coastal town of Miletus. He is on his way to Jerusalem and wants to reach his destination as soon as possible. Paul knows he won't see them again and encourages the elders to guard the "word of God's grace." Paul spent many years with the church in Ephesus and says that he declared "the whole counsel of God" to them.

- **Acts 20:18-21** ESV *And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- **Acts 20:26-32** ESV *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

Paul refers to his total message, everything he knows about God and His ways. Paul had a theology, a body of truth he knows is true.

We find the same thought in the letter Paul wrote to Timothy.

- **2 Timothy 1:13-14** NLT *Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.*

Paul wants the elders to be conscious of the tendency of the church to move away from its message.

The whole counsel of God refers to **God's plan to save humanity and create a people for Himself.**

God has a plan, and the Christian faith begins with this mighty plan. Salvation is part of this plan. One of the great secrets of the Christian life is to **view yourself as participating in God's plan.**

The Christian message **the Gospel is the proclamation of this grand plan.**

This is how God reveals Himself. He stepped into history...

- He told us what He would do before He did it. He will send a Saviour
- He then told us what He had done. (Jesus died for your sins)
- He then explains how we can live the lives He has empowered us.

SUMMARY:

1. God has a plan.
2. The plan of God is revealed and stated in the message of the Gospel.
3. We participate in God's plan.
4. The work of the Christian Church is to proclaim this message of the Gospel.

D. THE POWER OF A STORY

Growing up as a little boy, I was confronted with two conflicting stories every Christmas. In one scene, the baby Jesus is in a crib amongst animals in a stable, with his parents sitting by. As this story unfolded, shepherds, singing angels and wise men came onto the scene. I was told that we celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Then there was the other scene, Father Christmas, snow, and a slay with reindeer. Also, our home was decorated with a Christmas tree, tinsel, shiny lights and presents under the tree. I was told that we give gifts to one another because God gave us a gift, His Son.

As I grew up, I figured out the true and relevant story: God's story. Jesus became a human, born of a virgin, never sinned, and was punished for the sins of the world He took upon Himself. He offered salvation as a gift to believers and called them to follow Him and embrace His eternal kingdom.

Since I gave my life to Christ almost fifty years ago, I must admit that I have been confronted with many conflicting options for interpreting and understanding the Bible. Early on, I viewed the Bible as a mysterious book that only those who had studied it for many years could understand. They would then explain it to an ignorant audience every Sunday.

My first approach to understanding the Bible, primarily through the theology training I did, was to see it as silos of doctrine.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – SILOS OF DOCTRINE

Theology | Bibliology | Anthropology | Hamartiology | Soteriology | Christology | Pneumatology | Ecclesiology | Eschatology

Then everything changed for me. I realised that the best way to read and understand the Bible and what God wants to reveal to us is to **see it as a story!**

{a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view}

The Bible communicates the reality about God, humanity, and the cosmos through a collection of stories that form one big story together.

It is a revelation of God's purpose and plan for mankind. Knowing what it is is essential so that we can harmonise with it... to live in step with God.

TIM KELLER: *People cannot make sense of anything without attaching it to a storyline...*

Get the story wrong, and you'll get the response wrong...

The Bible is not just a diverse assortment of stories and materials; it comprises a master storyline. This is not to say the Bible is written like a novel with a tight, simple storyline. It

contains many individual stories and a lot of non-narrative material. God, the author of every part of the Bible, tells one overarching story about the world he created. There is a basic storyline to which all the parts relate, and which makes sense of all the pieces.

ANY GOOD STORY

1. Once upon a time (as it should be).
2. Then, one day (disruption).
3. Since then (attempt to restore).
4. Until finally (resolution).

THE BIBLE STORY

1. Once upon a time (CREATION) (How it used to be).
2. Then, one day (FALL) (How it is now).
3. Since then (REDEMPTION) (How it can and should be).
4. Until finally (RESTORATION) (How it will be)

THE BIBLE STORY IN FOUR SCENES

- 1. Creation**
- 2. Fall**
- 3. Redemption**
- 4. Restoration**

The call to follow Jesus is nothing less than a call to play our part in God's big story!

To be continued...