



God's Story, My Story

In the 40 End Goals of Youth Ministry, we include we talk about how young people should be affirmed in their identity as a loved child of God. This study seeks to help young people to do that by using the concept of story. Certainly, we know God's story for us in Scripture where God continues to speak in His perfect word. We also can think of our lives as stories where God is at work.

In particular, this study will look to explore the themes that

- Jesus calls me to faith and is with me daily as I live in baptismal grace and
- In Christ, I am both a citizen of heaven and of earth. I trust Jesus that He alone gives me life to the full in the here and now.

There are four sessions to this Bible study series along with a parallel devotion each month.

- **Session One: The Story of Scripture**
This study is built to help youth see the overarching story of Jesus that is found from the beginning of Scripture to the end.
- **Session Two: My Story**
For Baptized Children of God, it is alive in our everyday schedules, tasks, and relationships. This session is designed to help them tell God's story in their everyday lives.
- **Session Three: When the Story is Tough**
Hard times might lead youth to think God isn't faithful. Instead youth should be developing skills to dig deeper into Jesus when the hard times arrive. This Bible Study will give them a crash course in ways to remain connected to God even when the story is tough.
- **Session Four: Sharing the Study**
The plan always was and is that followers of Jesus will share The story. This study will help youth to think about ways for them to share the story of what Jesus did and is doing in their lives.

Leader's notes will be identified in orange italics. These are done to help support you as you lead the sessions.

Session One: The Story of Scripture

Leader Notes

Stories surround us. They are not only a part of our modern-day culture but have been a key piece of the fabric of human civilization since the beginning. Sometimes when we do a Bible Study, lock into a memory verse, or hear a sermon on Sunday, our tendency can be to think of only that piece of scripture, to forget the whole story. This study is built to help you and your kids see the overarching story of Jesus that is found throughout scripture. It is a vast, 30,000-foot view to see that this story is THE story.

Open with Prayer

Open with prayer together. Take some time to go around the room and see if anyone has any prayer requests as you get going.

Ice Breaker: Story Battle

This game is built to get the kids talking about story. There will be some competition but the debrief questions at the end will help them start thinking about the topic of story.

Materials Needed:

- Tape of some kind that doesn't leave residue on the floor
- A list of stories to battle (see below for ideas)

Rules

- Put down three parallel lines with tape, about 10 feet apart if possible and at least 10 feet long.
- Explain to everyone you are going to give them two choices of stories, they have to choose which is better or simply stand in the middle if they don't have an opinion or can't decide.
- Call out the options, using the taped off area as zones for each decision, and give players a chance to move to their locations
- Once that is done, give each side (not the middle) 30 seconds to explain why their choice is better.
- After both sides have defended their position, everyone must choose a side, even those in the middle. Players can switch sides as well, but in this second round no one is allowed to choose the middle.

Ideas for battles, feel free to make your own that will connect with your kids:

- Star Wars or Star Trek
- Encanto or Frozen
- Toy Story or Monsters' Inc
- Harry Potter or Percy Jackson
- DC or Marvel
- High School Musical or High School Musical The Musical The Series
- Remember the Titans vs. The Mighty Ducks

Debrief

This was obviously a silly game but think about how much story impacts our lives. There are fictional stories, historical ones, even deep stories that deal with sports and art.

- *Why do you think that stories are important?*
- *Why do we like to hear and tell stories to one another?*
- *What is your favorite book or movie? Why is it your favorite?*

- *What about that story do you find compelling?*

Story

- *What do you think are the parts of a good story?*

Leader Note: Allow students to struggle with and process this. Once they have shared this basic definition with them:

A story is made up of a few simple parts a character with a passion who encounters a problem and then decides.

Break down a few of the favorite stories that were shared within this definition.

- Who was the character?
- What was their passion?
- What problem did they encounter?
- What was the decision that they made?

The Story of Scripture

We could spend the rest of our lives looking at God's story in Scripture. However, for today, we are going to be starting at the very beginning to help us think about the overall story of the Bible. Read through the following verses to break down the story. Encourage students to pull out their Bibles or Bible apps to keep them versed in how to be in God's Word

Leader's Note – Give time for the students to work through this, allow them to ask questions on top of the ones written down.

- Character – God
 - Genesis 1:1
 - What does this one verse tell us about God?
 - From this one verse, what is one major characteristic you learn about God and who He is?
- Passion – Creation/Humanity
 - Genesis 1:26-31
 - How do these verses show us what God is passionate about?
 - Do you think these verses show that God is passionate about you? How?
- Problem – The Fall
 - Genesis 3:1-13
 - What goes wrong here?
 - How does this problem change everything?
 - The last time you did something you weren't supposed to, how did you feel? What did you do? What decisions would you hope those impacted by your sin would make?
- Decision
 - Genesis 3:14-15
 - John 3:16-17
 - What do you think Genesis 3:14-15 shows us about God's decision when the fall happens?
 - What is the decision God makes?
 - How do these Genesis verses and the verses from John relate? What parallels do you see between them?

God's Story Written Down

The Bible starts in the garden and ends with the new heavens and new earth, but the whole story is about God's deep love for His creation and His decision to redeem the fallen world.

- How do you see God's decision of salvation throughout the Bible?
As you have time, work through favorite stories in Scripture to see how sin broke God's perfect world and how God decides to love and send His Son to bring forgiveness.

Examples if students are struggling to find their own –

Abraham chosen to be the people from which the Messiah would come.

God saving and protecting his people throughout the Old Testament.

John the Baptist

Jesus

The early Church

- How can we see Jesus at the center of every part of God's story from beginning to end?

Now, this story continues to play out around you! What does the story of the Bible, the story of our creator and savior, mean for you today? Next week? Next year?

Take Home – A Reminder of the Story

Materials

- Notecards
- Pens

Have everyone write down John 3:16-17. Have them post it somewhere they will see it every day, like a car, bathroom mirror, back of a phone, etc. Whenever they see this notecard, it is a reminder of the deep passion and decision God made that His story would be about their redemption.

Close with Prayer

Session Two: My Story

Leader Notes –

The story of Jesus is not one that simply lives in the past. For Baptized Children of God, it is alive in our everyday schedules, tasks, and relationships. As the Holy Spirit works through us every day, it is important for students to understand the role that Jesus has in their story and that, in fact, God is continuing to tell the story of His redemptive work through them. Learning to share the story of Christian life is an important one, this study will give your students a framework for doing that.

Open with Prayer

Open with prayer together. Take some time to go around the room and see if anyone has any prayer requests as you get going.

Ice Breaker – Two Truths and a lie

Materials

- Notecards
- Pens

If you are in a group over 10, break into smaller groups for time's sake if needed. Hand everyone three notecards and a pen.

Give everyone five minutes to write down two true things about themselves and one lie, in any order. Have them write their names at the top of the notecard as well.

- Remind the everyone that they are trying to get people to vote for that lie.
- At five minutes see if anyone needs a little more time.

Once everyone is done get in a circle and have everyone pass their card to the person on their right. Give each card 15-30 seconds (use your judgement) and have each person vote for which comment they think is a lie by putting a mark next to it.

Once the cards reach their owner

- Have the owners tally the votes
- Go around and have people read their cards
- Have them share what people VOTED was the lie
- Have them share what ACTUALLY was the lie

Laugh at what is true and what isn't.

Debrief

- How hard was it to write figure out your truths? Your lie?
- Was it easy to spot the lie? How did you do it?
- How easily can we spot truth and lies in other people's lives? Can they see it in our own?

These truths are a part of your story!

What is your Story?

Everyone has a story. It has good times and bad. But it is still a story.

- If someone made a movie about your life what actor or actress would you want to play you?
- If you were asked to tell your story, what would it be?

- Where does it start? How did you get to this point?
- Who are the characters?
- What role does Jesus play in your story?

What does the Bible say about your story?

Jesus chose you! In your story He is the one who cast you, He is the author of not only your life but your salvation. Pull out Bibles, hard copy or apps, and dive into scripture and these questions about how Jesus chooses you.

- Jeremiah 29:11
 - Whose plans, yours or God's?
 - How do you tell the difference between God's plans and yours?
 - How do you see when God is at work in your life?
- Ephesians 2:8-10
 - Where does salvation come from? What does that mean for your life?
 - Do you ever think you have to earn God's love to be saved? What does that feel like? What do these verses tell you about this?
 - As we live out our story, what has God given you to be able to share His good story with others?
 - What does verse 10 tell you about your story?
- 1 Peter 3:21
 - What does this verse tell you about the importance of your baptism?
 - The story of God saving you and working through you starts at your Baptism. How does that change our story?
 - Sometimes we think of Baptism as a long-ago event we might not even remember. How often do you remember your baptism to remember *who* is writing your story? How might you do this every day?

How do you tell the story of Jesus in your life?

Learning to tell your story is learning to tell the story of what Jesus is doing in your life. In Revelation we find out that one of the best ways to fight the ways of the enemy and encourage our fellow believers is to share our testimony, the story of what Jesus is doing in our lives! Read Revelation 12:10-11

- In v. 10, who is the accuser? Have you ever felt accused (lied to about your salvation)?
- Want to know how to fight spiritual battles? Verse 11 tells us!
 - Blood of the lamb – Jesus death and resurrection for you!
 - Your baptized identity! You don't have to do anything, Jesus already did it!
 - Learn to tell your story!
 - “the word of their testimony” – this is what Jesus has done and is doing in your life! It's your story!
 - How do you see Jesus working in your life?

Take Home – Your Story

Have enough notebook paper and pens for your students. They could also use a notes app on their phones.

Help them tell their story –

Telling your testimony of Jesus in your life might seem very complicated. We might get tongue tied or feel like we need to have a dramatic, inspiring story to tell. Yet, God uses every Baptized child to tell about the good news of Jesus and we can celebrate that story.

One way you can do that is to use a simple story formula

- Jesus + You + Life = The Spirit working growth and love of Him and Neighbor
- Prepare a testimony from your own life as an example, a time Jesus worked through His Word, Church, or sacraments in your life and you saw how he grew you.
Be sure to emphasize for students that you are not looking for huge, dramatic stories (though it's possible those stories are a part of your group.) Instead, encourage them to look at small actions and regular ways in which God promises to work in His Word, the Sacraments and the church. For every hero story of the Bible, there are millions of faithful believers who we may hear little or nothing about. Yet, God worked in them as well.
- Give 15-20 minutes and let the students write. Put some music on the background, acoustic, to drown out other distractions.
- Give them a chance with a small group to share!

The Challenge – share your story with a friend or family member this week! Let it encourage them!

Close in Prayer

Session Three: When the Story is Tough

Leader Notes –

There is a YouTube clip online of a preacher at a national non-denominational Christian conference speaking about John the Baptist. He shares about how often we think following Jesus will make everything smooth sailing. Using John the Baptist he shares about how you can do everything God tells you and you still might end up being beheaded. He emphasizes a point by arguing how it is tough to share with people, "Follow God, it might end badly!" Often, we believe the lie that if things are going wrong God has abandoned us. At times it leads us to shy away from talking about how we dig deeper into Jesus when the hard times arrive. Your students need those skills. This Bible Study will give them a crash course in ways to remain connected to God even when the story is tough.

Open in Prayer

Open with prayer together. Take some time to go around the room and see if anyone has any prayer requests as you get going.

Ice Breaker - Tricky Charades

Materials

- Paper slips – 3 per person
- Pens
- 2 Baskets
- Timer

Divide into two teams. Have everyone write down a historical (i.e. Abraham Lincoln or Betsy Ross) or fictional character (i.e. Optimus Prime or Wonder Woman) on their 3 slips of paper, a different name on each. When they finish have them fold the slips in half and put them in the basket. Do not share the names.

Break your group into two teams. Each round consists of each team sending a player to the basket, one team guessing at a time (like normal charades)

Each player has 30 seconds to get their team to guess as many names as possible. When a name is guessed correctly, the slip is set to the side. This will be one point.

If a player doesn't know the name or doesn't think they can get the answer from their team, they can yell "SKIP!" and the slip is put back in the basket.

At the end of 30 seconds the amount of correctly guessed slips are counted to that teams' score and those slips are set to the side in another "completed" basket.

The teams keep rotating until the end of the round. A round ends when all the slips have been guessed

EXTRA CHAOS

- If you want to get extra spicy, when the slips in the basket reach five or fewer, both teams send a player to the basket.
- Both look at a single slip, the teams count down from three. Both players try to get their team to guess the answer.
- The first team to get the correct answer gets the point.
- Repeat until all slips have been guessed.

Rounds – each round has a specific set of rules.

- **Round 1** – May use as many words as possible to get the team to guess correctly.
 - No actions allowed
 - Words on the slip may not be used
 - No use of "sounds like" with a descriptor of the name
 - Use of words on the slip, actions, or "sounds like" descriptors require the player to return the slip to the basket and pull a new slip.
- **Round 2** – May only use *ONE* word to get team to guess correctly.
 - No actions allowed
 - Words on the slip may not be used
 - Use of more than one word requires the player to return the slip to the basket and pull a new slip
- **Round 3** – Straight charades, only actions
 - Only actions may be used, no words or sounds
 - Spoken words or sounds require the player to return the slip to the basket and pull a new slip

Debrief

- What was the hardest round for you?
- What was the most enjoyable round for you? Why?

Leader Note:

This silly game lets you see how your kids may interact with the world around them. It can be helpful for you to observe them as they play. Are they speakers or actors? How do they process sharing information? But most importantly, how do they handle a little bit of adversity? As you transition into Bible and discussion leave room for big questions. Moments when are stories get tough can be hard to share.

When the Story Gets Tough

Living and telling the story of Jesus isn't always easy. In fact, following God can mean struggle, persecution, and suffering. Living life in a fallen world will add everyday issues that we will struggle with along the way.

Living and telling the story of Jesus isn't always easy.

- What are some examples of times in the Bible where living following God wasn't easy?
- Who do you see suffering in Scripture who continue to follow and trust in God?
- What are some ways following Jesus isn't easy in your life? When have you experienced challenges that made you question your faith?

In the book of Genesis, Joseph follows God and his life ends up being a roller coaster. Ask Students who knows the story of Joseph from the book of Genesis

- The Story of Joseph
 - Watch the story of Joseph in the Bible Project video *Overview: Genesis 12-50*, start at 5:25
 - <https://youtu.be/F4isSyennFo?t=325>
 - What do you think of Joseph's life?
 - What does it tell you about follow God? What does that mean for your story?
- How does the story of Joseph end?
 - Read Genesis 50:15-20

- Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery, how do you think he could forgive them?
- Joseph had a rough life, both good and bad, looking at verse 20 what does it tell you about following God in the tough times?

Jesus doesn't promise that our life will be perfect. In fact, he tells us there will be trials. But what He does promise is to be with us along the way. Even when sin gets in the way, God stays true to all His promises. Read through and discuss the following scripture passages and how they relate to God not leaving us in our stories.

Jesus is with you, even when your story is tough. Look through these verses that might help youth to think about how God is present with their stories are tough.

- Psalm 23
 - What does it mean that God is with you in "the shadow of the valley of death"?
 - Why is it that we do not have to fear evil in our world?
 - How does he comfort you during those times?
 - How does it change how we approach trouble when we know that goodness and mercy follow us every day of our lives?
- John 16:33
 - Does Jesus promise that life will be easy?
 - What are the two promises in this verse? How do they help us navigate difficult times?
- Romans 5:3-6
 - Think about a time when life was particularly tough. How did you feel? How did that change over time?
 - How does it feel when we suffer and how does that change over time?
 - According to this verse, what does suffering produce?
 - What does hope look like in your everyday life?
 - Who suffered for us when we did not deserve it? Why?

Take Home – Brain Storm

Materials

- Whiteboard and markers

Brainstorm together what are some ways that when your story gets tough you can live in the hope of Jesus. Have each person choose one thing that they think would work best for them, encourage them to try that the next time they encounter the tough times.

Remember Revelation 12:10-11! Share that story together through the week of how God is working!

Close with Prayer

Session Four: Sharing the Story

Leader Notes –

Jesus always had a plan for how more people can hear about him: you! The plan always was and is that followers of Jesus will share the story. Your students are growing up in a time where evangelism has become a looked down on word. But what if instead of trying to find the exact right words to share the exact theological ideal, they simply shared the story of what Jesus did and is doing in their lives? This study will start them on that path.

Open with Prayer

Open with prayer together. Take some time to go around the room and see if anyone has any prayer requests as you get going.

Ice Breaker – Basic Cable Commercials

Materials

- White Board/Paper for brainstorming
- Markers
- Camera Phone for each group
- Fun props if you have some
- Projector or TV
- Computer where videos can be shared for viewing on TV or projector

The Activity

- Work together to create an imaginary town
 - Name
 - Population
 - Setting (mountains, beach, forest, etc.)
 - Once that is formed break your students into even groups, you will need at least two groups but if it is larger, feel free to make more.
- Have them select a food, business, or service. If you want to move things quicker, prepare cards beforehand with ideas and have the students draw card, examples: Taco Shop, Burger Joint, Laundromat, Parks and Rec Dept, movie theater, etc.
- Give them 30 minutes – their goal – make and record a Basic Cable Commercial for how great their business is and why people should buy from them (if you need to, show them a YouTube example of a basic cable commercial)
 - Encourage them to be creative
 - If you have some fun props, feel free to break them out
- Give them a ten-minute warning
- Bring everyone back together and watch the commercials! (have them record on a phone and send to one place and put them up on a TV or projector)

Debrief

- What makes a good commercial?
- Have you ever gone to a restaurant, seen a movie, or read a book and you felt like you became a commercial for it? How did you share those things with your friends and family?

Leader Note: In this next section work to connect that we share the things we love but somewhere along the way there is a disconnect with sharing Jesus. Help the kids see and discuss through these ideas as you talk.

Sharing the Story

Leader Note: Use a whiteboard or pad on an easel to talk through the questions in this section – we will come back to them.

Jesus has called us to be storytellers of His story, we get to tell the story of how great His Kingdom is! This is the best story that we can ever tell and the one we want everyone to know.

It might seem awkward to share the story of Jesus, but we tell story all the time. Think about commercials and sharing things you love, why do you think it is easier to share about those things as opposed to the story of Jesus?

- How do you think you share Jesus' story with:
 - People who don't know Him?
 - People who have become disconnected from the Body of Christ?
 - Those within the Church?
- *(Write these down)* What are some things that:
 - excite you about sharing Jesus' story?
 - scare you about sharing Jesus' story?

How Scripture Teaches us to Share Jesus' Story

Read these scripture verses out loud together. Then go back to the board and use these verses to help the kids see the way that scripture teaches us to tell the story

- a. Matthew 28:16-20
 - i. Ideas:
 1. *Jesus commissions us to tell His story*
 2. *We are never alone, Jesus is with us*
- b. Acts 2:38-47
 - i. Ideas
 1. *The Apostles did it!*
 2. *Repent and be baptized*
 3. *The ways of Jesus (Acts 2:42-43)*
 4. *Action and teaching!*
- c. Luke 10:1-11
 - i. Ideas:
 1. *Pray for harvest workers!*
 2. *Person of peace – you're not responsible for everyone, just those that God puts in your way.*
 3. *Shake it off – sometimes you will tell the story and have to realize that God isn't working through you*
- d. 1 Peter 3:15
 - i. Ideas
 1. *Have a defense for hope – know how Jesus' story works in your life!*
 2. *Gentleness and Respect!*
- e. John 14:15-17
 - i. Ideas:
 1. *The Spirit is working through you!*
 2. *He is with you and is your help*

Leader Note: Walk through this process with the students. Help them to see that God has placed them where they are to share the story of Jesus. Help them brainstorm how that might look with different groups of people and in the midst of their strengths and weaknesses.

Take Home – 10:02 Prayer

- Jesus has sent you out to share His story and invite others into His kingdom.
- Can we set an alarm to pray about this together? Let's read Luke 10:2 one more time: And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.
- Can we all set an alarm on our phones or watches for Saturdays at 10:02 am to spend a moment in prayer for harvest workers? Can we pray that God would?
 - Use us as workers in His harvest fields (story tellers)
 - Send out more workers into the fields
 - Grow His Kingdom!
- Feel free to use this alarm as many days a week as it won't get you in trouble in class!
- Let's talk about that prayer together over the coming months.

Close in Prayer