



Community Group Discussion Guide

The Story, Week 1 – Weekend of March 30 & 31, 2019

The Story We Live

Tell your children of it, And let your children tell their children. And their children to another generation. (Joel 1:3)

I. Getting Started: (fifteen to thirty minutes, depending on your setting)

The Bible speaks of God’s people as pilgrims, journeying to a different land, each experiencing their own personal journey, but all in a Story far greater than their individual narratives. Called the “body of Christ” in Scripture, the church points to a Story that extends from eternity past, across all of time and into eternity future—far beyond the boundaries of our individual lives. This is the first of six weeks in “The Story” series. We will cover The Creation, The Fall, The Rescue, The Restoration and The Story We Share.

Starter Questions:

- What is your favorite Bible story and why? Does it speak specifically to you in some way? (Go around the circle and let every person open up to their favorite story)
- If you were to sum up the story of the Bible in just a few minutes, what would be the major themes? (Maybe one or two answer)
- How do our lives, or our stories, fit into God’s big picture Story, His “master story” of redeeming a fallen creation to Himself?

II. Discussion of Scripture: Romans 8:18-30 (forty-five minutes)

Context: In Romans 8, Paul is providing us continued instruction on how to live the Christian life. The book of Romans is invaluable for seeing and understanding God’s overarching plan to rescue His creation, including you and me, from the destruction of our sin. Paul’s writing paints a “big picture” view, but he also takes great care to speak to each of us about God’s “sub-story” for our lives.

Speaking to the Christian, saved to participate in God’s mission to the world, Paul emphasizes that in Christ, the condemnation that our sin brought, is now gone—no more guilt through Christ’s sacrifice, and no more bondage to sin through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (8:1-11).

In verses 12-17, Paul goes on to talk about what it means to be a child of God—those “who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (vs. 14). With this great power (the

Spirit of God) we can overcome sin and are prepared, as adopted children of God, to participate in His work of redeeming a lost world to Himself. In our sonship role in His Story of redemption, He is our Abba Father where there is no longer any question of our security. We approach Him as part of His family and we're honored as His coworkers.

Like so much of Paul's writing, He sets the stage for the Gospel and, by speaking to our sonship and the Spirit's leadership, speaks to our readiness to join God's Story.

Discussion Question: Scripture tells us we are God's children—that we are empowered and led by His Spirit to participate in His plan for the world. Regardless, we're often hesitant to live boldly for Christ. Why do you think this is the case?

Romans 8:16–30 (ESV) - The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. [18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. [23] And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

[26] Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. [27] And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. [28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

For Discussion:

1. We are part of God's family, adopted sons, empowered by His Spirit as servants in His redemptive work—but is it worth it? In verse 17, Paul says we will share in the sufferings of Christ, but that we will also share in His glory. Paul wants us to consider this difficult question- Is our inheritance worth the hardship of following Christ?

Question: In verse 23, Paul speaks of believers groaning in our suffering, living as a child of God in a fallen world. What is causing you to groan today?

2. Paul encourages us in verse 18, declaring “that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Paul seems to be encouraging us to have an understanding of “the glory that is to be revealed to us”.
 - **Question:** How do we develop a vision of the coming glory? Speak to how nourishing our souls with God’s Word, worship, fellowship with other believers, and the work of ministry plays a role in giving us a vision for this future glory.
3. **Taking a quick detour for clarification:** In verse 15 of chapter 8, Paul tells us that as believers we are sons of God. So why in verse 23 does he speak of waiting “eagerly for adoption as sons”? It means that while we have been justified (legally, we are sons of God), we have yet to experience the fullness of our adoption—we are not what we will someday be.
4. In verses 26 – 30, Paul provides for us solid ground to stand on as God’s adopted children, while yet living in a world where even the creation around us groans for relief from the effects of sin.
 - **Our future hope** (versus 18 – 25): In very recent years, numerous books have been written and sermons preached on “living your best life now”. Romans 8 speaks loudly to the overwhelming struggle we experience in the world today—as believers, our best life is certainly not now! In verse 25 Paul commands us to **wait patiently** for the day when “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of God” (vs. 21).
 - **Discussion Question:** What makes it so hard for us to wait patiently—to live in the hope for the day when we will be set free from the bondage and corruption of this world?
 - **Help from the Holy Spirit** (vs. 26 – 27): Earlier in Romans 8, Paul tells us we are led (empowered) by the Holy Spirit as adopted children of God. In verses 26 and 27, He speaks again of the Holy Spirit and encourages us in our weakness that as we struggle and suffer, the Holy Spirit speaks our needs to God. Paul encourages us, when we don’t know what to pray, or can’t find the words to pray, to not despair—the Holy Spirit searches our hearts, hears our groaning and intercedes for us according to God’s will.
 - **Discussion Question:** Have you ever been too weak emotionally or spiritually to pray with words—maybe able to pray only with tears? How does it

encourage you to know the Holy Spirit hears “under” your groaning and expresses your need to God?

- **God is working in *everything!*** (vs. 28 – 30): Paul goes on to say that we can know for sure “that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” We should be clear that this text does not teach that “all things”, including the difficult things, are good; but that God *works* them “for the good”. Difficulties are not good, but God will ultimately use them for good. When we say, “nothing good can come of this”, Romans 8 denies that. It is also a great comfort to know that we can’t destroy God’s purposes in our lives—all means all—even in our failures He is working through it for good, as He did in Joseph’s life when his brothers intended to destroy him—his response? “...you meant evil against me, but God meant it for” (Genesis 50:20).
 - **Discussion Question:** Is there a current circumstance in your life that certainly isn’t good, and you’re finding it hard to see how God can bring good from it? For believers, such circumstances can bring humility, break us of our pride and self-dependence, develop godly character, create compassion and make us more like Christ. Certainly, it is difficult to see good coming from the extremes of evil. But God promises us, in our suffering, He will work in it and through it for our ultimate good.

III. Responding in Prayer: (fifteen minutes)

“Pray for your one.” In the worship center for this entire series, we will be writing the names of “our one”. We are asking every person in our church to be praying for one person who lives in the Edmond, OKC, Guthrie area who needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, we pray for family members or friends to come to Christ. For this six week study, we are asking each person to think of a co-worker, a neighbor or family member who lives locally. As a CG, it may be intimidating for a younger believer to share initials (JM or WM) or share first names (John or Mary), and may take a few weeks to get there spiritually, but lead your CG to this place. We will have opportunities to write these names on the wall on the back of the Worship Center, as well.

Facilitator’s note: In future weeks, we will have role plays, opportunities for breaking into groups of twos’ and threes to practice scenario’s in real world Gospel conversations. We are not asking this of you in the first two weeks. Also, it is unrealistic to think you can cover all this material. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you to the questions to “sit on” with your CG as you lead discussion. Be patient to allow for discussion. You may call on more mature believers in your CG to get the discussion going.

It is critical for you to take time to pray for your “ones”. Thank you for seeking unity as the body of Henderson Hills to be part of this “all church” study.