

SMALL GROUP SERMON STUDY

Leader's Guide

January 2 and 3, 2010

The Story: Introduction

Various Scriptures

Ken Idleman

the Lower Story.

At Crossroads 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.

For Discussion

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

(Use questions that best fit the needs of your group. Additional questions in The Story, pp. 390-400.)

1. Has your experience with studying and learning the Bible been fulfilling or frustrating? Why?
2. What do the following passages tell us about the importance of the Bible?
2 Timothy 3:16,17
John 17:17
Psalm 119:105
Psalm 119:9
Hebrews 4:12
Isaiah 55:11
Romans 10:17
2 Timothy 2:15
James 1:22-25
Psalm 119:97
3. Do you have a favorite Bible story or Bible character? What about the story or character most fascinates or resonates with you?
4. 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?
5. List a benefit (or two) that you expect to personally experience from going through The Story this year. How do you think the Church as a whole will benefit? Group Covenant

For Further Study

What Is the Main Message of the Bible? At:
<http://www.biblica.com/bibles/about/4.php>

The Big Idea

This weekend we began an eight-month series taking us through the whole Bible. We're basing this on a book called THE STORY, which is all text from the Bible, with some of the "repeats" etc. omitted. We'll each do our daily Bible readings. Then Ken will preach on weekends from the section we've read. At our small group meetings, we'll discuss the same section.

NOTE: Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, TX, where Max Lucado and Randy Frazee are ministers, recently went through the same series. They developed excellent studies for their small groups. The studies you'll receive each week will borrow heavily from their work. Let Rick Lowry, the lesson writer for our small groups, know how their format is working for you.

FURTHER NOTE: Pages 390-400 in THE STORY contain further questions for discussion.

The Background

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

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 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