

“History: His Story, Your Story” (Back to School Pt. 1)
(Psalm 107:1-3, 43)

- **“Why Do I Have to Go to School?”**

- Ladies and gentlemen, *Back to School Season is upon us!* How are we doing? Some people *love* this time of year, some people *do not!* For most of us, it’s a mixture—there’s sadness that summer is ending, there’s excitement for a new season—if you’re a parent, there’s probably some *relief!* Like it or not, School relates to *all of us*, whether you’re a student, or you have family members who are, or you work in education. And with that, there’s a common question that, at some point, we’ve all asked, or heard: *“Why do I have to go to school?!”*
 - I actually want to pose that as a serious question today, because it has a lot to do with our new series: *Why do we go to school?* Better yet, *What is the purpose of school?* I think it’s safe to say that sometimes, with all the necessary activities that come with school, it’s easy to get distracted from the *main purpose* and focus on things that miss the point. Here’s what I mean: if we make going to school *only* about getting good grades and taking tests, there’s no guarantee that we’ll actually accomplish the *purpose* of school. We *might* get students who received a great education, *or* we might just get a bunch of kids who know how to take tests and get grades—and nothing else. (Don’t hear me wrong: kids, please, try your best to get good grades!) I hope I’m not offending anyone, but I *think* most of the teachers here would agree: the *purpose* of school is not taking tests and getting good grades, those are *tools* that help accomplish *the purpose of education*. *Education* is about *forming* and *equipping* people—shaping their character, their hearts and minds with understanding, and giving them knowledge and skills to contribute to a bigger picture in the world. Would you agree?
 - I’m taking a risk here, because I know we have some *brilliant educators* in the room (who might be emailing me right now), but I think it’s a good illustration for how we approach church. We’re here for *“The School of Discipleship,”* right? We can focus on secondary issues with the church just as easily and miss our purpose: if we make the “main thing” *getting as many butts in seats as possible, or building the best programs imaginable, or growing the metrics year over year—we might* be helping people connect with Jesus and the New Life He offers. *Or, we might* just be getting a bunch of people in a room, watching an exciting service and saying, *“Wow, that was entertaining, what will they think of next?!”* Do you get what I’m saying? The church’s purpose is not just growing attendance or crafting the best programs. Our purpose is to excel in “the school of discipleship” and share that with as many people as possible! Jesus has saved us from sin and death, and now we’re learning how to do life *His way*, and share it with the world.
 - Paul describes this in Ephesians 4, this is the foundation of our series: **“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.”** (Eph. 4:11-13) Similar to what we said about school, the purpose of church is *equipping* God’s people, and *formation* into the likeness of Christ.
 - All that’s to say, *welcome to The School of Discipleship!* The bad news is, you’ll never graduate, at least not this side of Heaven. The good news is, you’ll never stop learning and growing. It’s a lifelong journey, together! In this back to school season, we have 4 basic subjects: 1st Period, *“History: His Story & Your Story,”* 2nd Period: *“English: The Power of Words,”* 3rd Period: *“Science: Bible Lab,”* 4th Period: *“Math: The Miracle of Multiplication.”* Are you ready? Let’s get into today’s textbook: *History*. Before we look at our main Scripture, *let’s pause and pray.*

- **History: His Story, Your Story**

- **“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south...Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.”** (Ps. 107:1-3, 43) Who here likes history, any history buffs in the house? *Why* do we like history? Is it because we like obscure facts and

dates and random details? That can all be interesting, but I would argue that we're interested in that stuff because *we love stories*. We love *made-up stories* and *true stories*, short stories and long stories, written stories and visual stories. (And our world spends billions of dollars every year telling stories through movies, books, social media, news reporting, even sports). We are *wired* for stories because *we're living in a Story*. We're made for stories—and stories *make us*. Deep down, we feel there's something significant about life, the part we play, where we came from, where it's going. John Eldredge says, **"Life is a story. Story is woven so deeply into reality that the human brain organizes information in the form of narrative...the question is, what is the story you are living in?"**

- That brings us to the Bible. Many people rightfully call this book *the Greatest Story Ever Told*. The Bible is technically not just *one book*, but *a library of 66 books*—written over 1,500 years, in several different languages, in different lands, by different authors (nomads, kings, farmers, poets, fishermen). It includes laws, history, poetry, parables, prophecies, biographies, letters, and more. But in all of that, the incredible—even *miraculous*—thing is, the Bible is *One Big Story*. It's not just a rulebook, or a record, or a compilation of theology—it's primarily a *Story*. God's Story, and our story. It is *the True Story* of everything.
- Like any story, the Story of the Bible follows a structure. You can break it down into multiple "Acts" or segments that form a big narrative arc from start to finish. I'd love to give you the detailed breakdown, but for the sake of time, we're going to walk through the most *basic* breakdown, in **4 Acts: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration**. If you understand this, you'll better understand the Bible, the world, and your life.
- **Act I: Creation (Genesis 1-2).** **"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."** (**Gen. 1:1**) God, the Transcendent, Glorious, Holy One, exists eternally in perfect Love—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 3 eternal Persons, 1 eternal Being. Out of the overflow of His goodness, He willed to create. And it was *all very good*. That's what the Bible says, and it's foundational. Before there was *original sin*, there was *original glory*. We have inherent purpose, we are made from and for love. That's our story. Not all stories say this: there are competing stories that do *not* affirm the goodness of God, or the goodness of creation. There are stories that say *there is no story*. To have a story, you need an Author. Some people believe there *is no story* because they believe there is *no author*—no God, no meaning, just a bunch of random events. But we believe that because God is, *we are*—and we have a story that is wrapped up in *His Story*.
- **Act II: Fall (Genesis 3).** Genesis 2-3 tells the mysterious origins of Adam and Eve's Fall, and the N.T. later reflects, **"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin...in this way death came to all people, because all sinned..."** (**Rom. 5:12**) Why does the world have *so much beauty* and *so much suffering*? Why do we have the capacity for *so much good* and *so much evil*? Why do we have this ache that things are not as they should be and this longing to avoid death? The Story of Scripture gives us a frame of understanding: *sin*. If you don't believe in sin, if you deny the reality of evil, you'll have trouble making sense of much of the world and yourself. God is good and made everything good—but He gave His us free will. We rebelled, we turned away. And in doing so, we became captive to sin and death.
- **Act III: Redemption (Genesis 4-Jude).** **"The Lord said to Abraham... 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you...and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you.'" (Gen. 12:1-3) "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us."** (**Eph. 1:3, 7**) Every good story has a beginning, then a problem gets introduced, and the narrative is about how that problem gets resolved. In this big story, our problem is sin and death. The solution is God's plan of redemption. That plan of redemption culminates in Jesus Christ, His life and death and resurrection. But the redemption plan begins *all way back* in Gen. 12, when out of all the people on the earth, God chooses Abraham and Sarah to make a covenant. They're chosen to be a new family, a new nation, for the redemption of the world. *Most* of the Bible is about the highs and lows, victories and failures, of this complicated, often dysfunctional family, called *Israel*.

Then, with the coming of Jesus, everything changes, and this new covenant is opened to *all people*, in the Church. He's the reason we can sing, "*Father Abraham had many sons...I am one of them and so are you...*"

- **Act IV: Restoration (Revelation).** "**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'"** (Rev. 21:1-5) The best part of this story *is yet to come*. We have redemption from sin and death through Jesus Christ, and because of this, we have a hope and a future. In Christ, our hope is not in humanity's best efforts (which always fall short); it's in God's redemption. In Christ, our future is not to decompose in the grave—or worse, suffer eternal judgment; it's *the restoration of all things*. Heaven is coming to earth. The old things will pass away—no more sin, death, mourning, crying or pain. *God is making all things new, we will be made new*. All we have to do to make *this Story, our story*, is put your faith in Christ.
- **The Story of Redemption**
 - That's the amazing thing about the Bible: it's the true Story that can become *our story*, if we say yes to God's gift of grace. If we trust Jesus as our Savior. If we surrender to Him as our Lord. His Story becomes *your story*. What would you have given as a kid to become *part of* your favorite story? Didn't you want so badly to *participate* in it with your heroes? That wasn't just a whim of your childish imagination, that was a clue in your heart for *what you were made for!* You were *made* to participate in the Greatest Story Ever Told—along with all the heroes of the faith, because of *the Ultimate Hero of the Faith*, Jesus. This takes us back to where we started.
 - "**Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story...**" (Ps. 107:2) The Psalms are the songbook, the hymnal of Israel—and it's full of references to God's Big Story of Redemption. This Psalm was written as a liturgy for the people gathered to worship after returning from Exile. It's a long song that goes all over the place—it talks about all kinds of different struggles people faced and how God rescued them and brought them *all back together to worship Him*. Some people wandered in the wilderness, life was a struggle to survive. Some people ended up imprisoned, in deep darkness, because they had rebelled against God. Some suffered from affliction because they lived like fools, and they got sick. Some went out to sea and got tossed by the waves and almost got lost. But in each of the examples, it gives the same refrain: "**Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress...let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love.**" (Ps. 107:6, 8, 13, 15, 19, 21, 28, 31) Four times, it gives all these examples of people who were *lost*, almost gone, whether by their misfortune or because of their own foolish choices. And four times it says, *they cried out to God, and He saved them*. These are real examples, for real people. But they're also examples for *all of us*, whatever our story, whatever our circumstance, when we finally realize *we need God to save us!* The New Testament says, "**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**" (Rom. 10:13)
 - This is a Story of Redemption—and we get to be part of it. Do you know what that means? It means that your past hurts and brokenness no longer have to define your story—instead, you are defined by the God of Redemption! It means that your "complicated history" is now *His Story!* It means that wherever you're coming from—North, South, East, West—*God heard you cry out the Name of Jesus, and He reached down, and He rescued you, and He brought you home*. And in this new life He's given you, now He's giving you a purpose: to go and help others find Him too.
 - **Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.** Think about *everything He has brought you through—where would you be, who would you be, without Jesus?* Do you know Him? Or are you still on the fence? Today can be the day that your story becomes *His Story*, if you just call on Him. Maybe you think the waves are too large, your problems are too big, your sins are too great—I promise you, *He is much, much greater*. Say yes to Him! *Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story*. Amen!