

# God's Great Story

Advance in Faith 101



**Lesson 1: What does it mean to be a Christian?**  
**The Christian Story – Part 1**



## 1. Introduction

We often see theology as a systematic study of religious thought that has little to do with everyday life. But, rightly understood, theology is the real life story of God's relationship to us and our relationship to one another lived out in a broken world.

By this definition, whether you “think” theologically or not, you are “doing” theology every day in the decisions you make, the words you speak, the feelings you have, and the attitudes you nurture in your heart. All of these responses are rooted in your perspective on the nature of God, yourself, your relationships, and the world around you. These “perspectives” are theology because they inform and frame the way you live your life.

The question is not whether you are a theologian, but what kind of theologian you are!<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the next 6 weeks is to cover the ‘big story’ of our faith.

- What is the Christian faith all about?
- What does it have to say about how Christian's view the world?
- What theological ideas should influence how we live our lives?

Like any faith the Christian faith seeks to answer the big questions about life;

- Is there a **God**, and if so, what is he/she/it like? (Your answer to this is your **theology**)
- How do I **learn about / experience God**? (Your answer to this is your **religious practice**)
- What is the **universe**, and how does it operate? (Your answer to this is your **cosmology**)
- How do I **acquire knowledge** (any knowledge of anything)? (Your answer to this is your **epistemology**)

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<sup>1</sup> Lane, Timothy S.; Paul David Tripp (2006-11-01). Relationships: A Mess Worth Making (p. 20-21). New Growth Press. Kindle Edition.

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- What are **human beings**? (Your answer to this is your **anthropology**)
- Does humanity have a real **problem**? If so, what is it and how can it be solved? (Your answer to this is your **soteriology**)
- How should I **live** (what is *good* and what is *bad*? *What is important*?) (Your answer to this is your **ethical system**)

Christian Apologetics is the branch of Christian theology that looks to answer these questions systematically.

In the next weeks we will take a somewhat different approach by beginning at the beginning of the story, always a good place to start, and look at the story of the Christian faith as it develops and see what answers come to our attention.

In reality what we will do is to look, rather than at who God is, but to what God is doing.

## The Importance of Story

1 Corinthians 15:1-6

2 Timothy 3:16

## The Story - Past

### Genesis 1:1 God Created

The very first verse of Scripture sets the foundation for the story; God created. Other faiths and worldviews will have a different foundation.

How do you think the foundation of God creating makes a difference to the way a Christian lives?

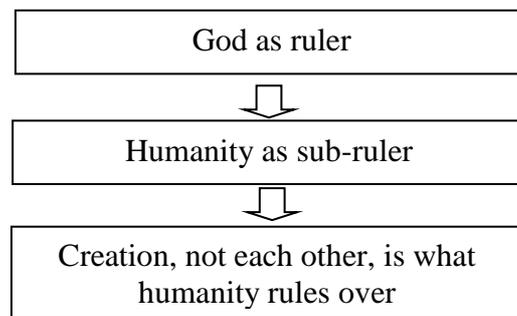
**Genesis 1:27, 28** – What did he create? God created humanity in his image.

Humanity was created to do 2 things;

- to procreate and fill the earth and
- to rule over creation; to reign over creation; to be the authority over creation

There is no covenant here because all things, including humanity, are in their rightful place under their rightful authority.

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**Genesis 3:1-7** – the rebellion. This is about who is in control not about fruit. This answers the big question “Why is the world the way it is?” Humanity rebels against the authority of God.

**Genesis 9:2** – A change in the way in which humans and the creation interact.

Human beings are thus envisaged in Genesis 9 as having abandoned their God-given responsibility to exercise just and appropriate dominion over the earth. Instead, war has been declared on animal creation. The multifaceted nature of human kingship is reduced to one aspect— conquest. In essence, the dimensions of the curse of Genesis 3 on the animal world are now being more fully revealed, as evil works its way deeply into creation.<sup>2</sup>

Genesis 9:12, 13 – after a flood God covenants, or makes an agreement with, Noah and the entire world; he, God, will not bring this kind of destruction again. He will not use creation against humanity.

**Genesis 12:1-3** – God covenants with Abram, later known as Abraham, that from his descendants someone will come who will change the way all the nations of the world relate to God. God now works through the family of Abraham and eventually their descendants become the nation of Israel, the Jewish nation.

For the Jewish nation this became the foundational covenant, along with Sinai, for the nation.

Genesis 32:22-28 – Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, is renamed from Jacob to Israel, and it is from the man Israel that the nation of Israel

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<sup>2</sup> Iain Proven, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament really says and why it matters* (Baylor University Press, Texas, 2014) e version Chapter 7

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comes. Jacob has 12 sons and from these men come the 12 tribes of Israel.

The name Israel means 'one who wrestles with God'. This name encapsulates the history of the nation of Israel.

Genesis 45:16-20 – Jacob's family goes to live in Egypt at the request of Egypt's pharaoh, probably Amenemhat III.

### **Group Questions:**

- Have each person in the group explain why they are a Christian. Keep a 1 or 2 word summary to tell the combined class.
- Were there any aspects of the story of Christianity that were new to you or surprised you?
- How might you tell the story of your faith?
- Does the story so far, change any thoughts you have had about the Christian faith?
- Were there any questions that came to mind as we made our way through the story tonight?