

in all things

PRE-GATHERING BIBLE STUDY #1

LEADER NOTES

MATERIALS:

- Bibles
- Small slips of paper
- Pens/pencils
- 1 Participant Guide per student

GOALS

1. This study will explore the importance of story and will introduce the grand story told in the Bible using Colossians 1 and Acts 2 – a story we will call the “Story of All Things.”
2. Through the act of reading and rereading, participants will begin to see themes and patterns in the “Story of All Things” and will begin seeing themselves in the story.

LEADER NOTE: Before, during, and after the Gathering, we will dig into the 5 themes mentioned in Goal 2. Here is a brief explanation of each:

- a. Christ **CREATES** all things—Christ is the creator of all things and became a creature himself, entering into his own creation.
- b. Christ **RECONCILES** all things—Christ reconciles all things to himself through his death and resurrection.
- c. Christ **TRANSFORMS** all things—Christ transforms the lives of all his people into his image.
- d. Christ **REIGNS** over all things—Christ (risen, ascended, complete sovereign) reigns over all authorities inside and outside of the church.
- e. Christ will **RETURN**—Christ promises to return to restore all things and make his reign explicit for all to see.

INTRODUCTION

Open in Prayer

SAY: Think of the movie, TV show, or book that you have seen/read the most. What is it? How many times have you seen/read it? Why do you continue to watch or read that, even though you know how the story ends? (Allow time for students to respond.)

We love a good story, and we love to re-watch and read our favorite stories. When we re-watch or

reread the same thing again and again, we learn the story and we may even get to know it so well that it becomes a part of us. This is how it works with any good story. The Bible is the same way! The Bible tells the greatest story ever told. It is the way God speaks to us and the way He intervenes in the world. It is powerful stuff! Through His Word, God creates the world, sustains it, and brings eternal life to it.

God invites us to read and reread His Word and spend significant time in it so we might learn his story. Our hope is that we might learn it so well that the story becomes a part of who we are. When we read and reread the story of God's Word, we begin to notice amazing things about who God is and what He does that we might not have seen before. Our hope is that by spending time in God's Word, we will see new things and start seeing ourselves in the story the Bible tells.

Game

Directions: Give each student a slip of paper and have them write a famous movie/TV show/book that the majority of their group will have seen. Collect the papers and pair up students. Give each student one of the slips of paper and have them try to retell the main story of the movie/TV show/book to their partner through acting it out/ texting emojis in a group chat/ drawing it out in symbols for people to guess what they're trying to reference. When all pairs have figured out the story, have a few people try and get the entire group to guess.

Here are some examples of stories you can use:

Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Shrek, Batman, the Office, Harry Potter, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Here are some examples of stories as emojis:



(Space Jam)



(Harry Potter)



(the Lion King)

ASK: Today's Bible study focuses on the idea of story. What are the main parts that make up a story? (Characters, plot, conflict, climax, setting, themes, etc.) **What makes something a good story?** (answers will vary)

LESSON

SAY: The story of the Bible contains the same kinds of parts that make for a good story. It has characters, plot, conflict, climax, setting, and themes. It's also a really big story. Lots of episodes over the span of millennia are all connect in one grand story. Learning the story takes time, just like it takes time for us to learn other stories we love. As we read and reread or watch and re-watch, we start learning the story

better because we see things we didn't notice before. Just like we discover small details and larger themes in the stories we watch on Netflix or read in a book, we will also discover small details and larger themes in the story of God's Word.

As we prepare for the 2022 National Youth Gathering, the encouragement for us will be to read and reread and to do it slowly. As we continue to read the Bible, things will appear we may not have noticed before. When you see new things, take note of them. Especially when you see something appear over and over again, take note of it. In future studies, we are going to pay special attention to some of these themes – big ideas that repeat. We will even supply you with these icons you can draw in your Bible to help you note themes when you see them. You'll find out more about these icons in future studies.



ASK: What is something you've noticed popping up a lot in the story of the Bible? (Answers will vary. Here are some examples: there are a lot of barren ladies, the use of water is all over the place, there is a ton of healing going on!

SAY: We often pick out new things each time we reread or re-watch something. Let's put this to the test: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNSgmm9FX2s>

THE STORY OF ALL THINGS

We are going to try something similar with God's Word. We are going to take a passage, read it once, explore a few other parts of God's Word, and then return to the same passage we started with. The passage we are going to read is **Colossians 1:15-20** and it is the theme passage for the 2022 National Youth Gathering. In just the span of six verses, the apostle Paul tells a story.

Read **Colossians 1:15-20**.

ASK: What parts of a good story do you see in these verses? Answers will vary. Below are some example questions and answers.

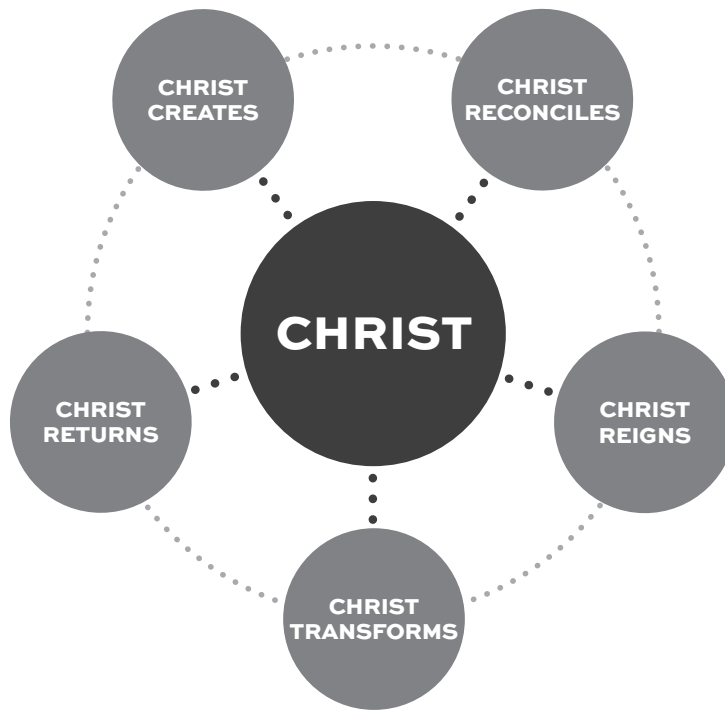
Who are the characters? Jesus is the "He." The church. All things including thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities.

What is the setting? Heaven and earth.

What conflict do you see? The need to reconcile all things and make peace.

What sounds like the climax of the story in these verses? The cross. Jesus as the firstborn of the dead.

LEADER NOTE: The story told in Colossians 1:15-20 is a monumental story. It is a compact form of a story we call the "Story of All Things." God's Word tells us the story of everything. This story helps us understand who God is, who we are, how God has acted in his creation, and where everything is ultimately going. These six verses from Colossians help us to see more clearly the Story of All Things in which Christ creates, reconciles, transforms, reigns, and returns to make all things new.



SAY: When we read, reread, and study the Scriptures, we discover that there is a larger story to the Bible. The Word of God tells us the “Story of All Things.” It is the greatest story ever told and it tells us about who God is, who we are, how God has acted in the world, and where everything is ultimately going. We are going to hear A LOT about the Story of All things as we get ready for the 2022 National Youth Gathering. But what does that mean? How does that story go? Here is a brief summary:

As you read the summary as a group, have students circle or underline important words or phrases.

The God of the universe is a loving God who desires to be in a relationship with his creation. He gives us the “Story of All Things,” which tells us he created the world and made his presence known in it. He stepped into creation himself, walking in the garden and engaging in a perfect relationship with his people. God’s people rejected his word and desired to write their own version of the story of all things with themselves at the center. Consequently, God cursed his creation in his anger over sin and the perfect relationship between God and his people was broken. Yet, God continued to move the “Story of All Things” forward according to his good and loving plan. God chose to be present with his people even in their sinfulness and he promised to send a savior to make all things right. God chose Abraham and his descendants to be God’s special people and through this people God would bless the nations. God set apart Israel to receive the promises and to be the people from whom the Messiah, the savior, would come. God rescued his people from their brokenness through the saving work of Jesus on the cross. His death and resurrection reconcile and heal all things. God continues to transform all things through his word and through the service of his people, the church, until the day he returns. On that day, we will see the fullness of Christ’s reconciliation and reign over all things in his new creation.

ASK: What did you underline? What are your initial thoughts about The Story of All Things?

If you had to summarize the “Story of All Things” in your own words, what would you say?

SAY: As we prepare for the 2022 Gathering, we are going to keep studying the “Story of All Things.” We are going to do lots of reading and rereading in hopes that we will see new things, notice themes that repeat, and ultimately find our own place in this story.

There are many places we can go in the Scriptures to hear the “Story of All Things” from different angles. We’ve already read a version from Paul. We’ve explored a version written by the authors of this Bible study. Let’s take a look at another passage that gives us a glimpse into the “Story of All Things.” Read Acts 2:22-36. This is a portrayal of the “Story of All Things” through the apostle Peter’s lens in his sermon on Pentecost.

ASK: Where do you see overlap between Peter’s account of all things in Acts 2 and the paragraph summary of the “Story of All Things” above?

God has a plan (verse 23). The death and resurrection of Jesus (verse 23-24; 32). The reign of Jesus over all things (verses 33-36).

What differences do you see?

LEADER NOTE: If your group has time and wants to go deeper into multiple narratives of the “Story of All Things, consider splitting your group into smaller groups and have each group read a different passage. Other passages you could read in addition to the Acts 2 passage are Luke 24:13-27; Nehemiah 9:6-21, 26-31. It might be fun for students to compare and contrast the different stories and see what they come up with!

SAY: Now that we have heard the “Story of All Things” from a few different angles, let’s come back to Colossians 1:15-20 to read it one more time. This time let’s read it not just to see that there is a “Story of All Things,” but also to see that we are a part of this amazing story. The “Story of All Things” is God’s story, but he calls you into it. The God of the universe loves you so much that he reveals himself to you in his Word again and again. He wants you to read and reread the “Story of All Things” in his Word so that you might know him and so that you might see yourself in that story.

Read Colossians 1:15-20.

ASK: Where do you think we fit into the “Story of All Things?”

(I am a part of “all things” so that means I’m a part God’s story! He created me and reconciles me through Jesus. In my baptism, God unites me to Jesus in his death and resurrection and thereby begins a life of transformation in me. God reigns over me in the church and someday he will return for me—He does all this so I can serve Him and His people. This is bigger than just one person. This story is bigger than me. It includes all of God’s people. We are in it together as the church.)

SAY: Find a group of a few people (If your group is small enough, do the next activity all together). Take a few minutes to reread Colossians 1:15-20 and draw some images that you see. If time permits, have small group share with the large group.

In your own words, how would you summarize The Story of All Things?

SAY: Our everyday lives are a part of The Story of All Things. When we spend time in God’s Word, we begin to see Him at work in all parts of our life. As we prepare for the Youth Gathering, we will spend more time studying God’s word, learning more about who God is and what He has done for us.

CALL TO ACTION

LEADER NOTE: These calls to action are ways participants can put what they've learned in this study into practice in their everyday lives. Perhaps one or both of these calls could be a challenge for the week and each participant can bring a report bag the next time you meet.

1. Take time to think about your life in the way of Story. How would you tell your own life's story? Who are the characters? What is the setting? How does the plot unfold, etc.? Write it down and share it with a parent, friend, or someone else close to you.
2. How has Jesus made you a part of the Story of All Things by connecting you to his death and resurrection in your baptism? If you don't know the story of your baptism day, ask someone who remembers to tell you the story.
3. Take time this week to reread Colossians 1:15-20 and Acts 2:22-36 on your own. For bonus points, read them with another member of your congregation. What similarities do you (and maybe this other person) notice this time? What differences do you see? Use the pages in your participant guide to markup both passages, identifying important words/phrases or repeating themes/ideas.

Close in Prayer