THE STORY CHAPTER 1

The Beginning of Life as We Know It

September 10-11, 2016

Appearing on the Big Screen…

In the Upper Story, God creates the Lower Story.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

*The Story,* pg. 1; *Genesis 1:1 NIV*

His vision is to come down and be with us in a beautiful garden.

The first two people reject God’s vision and are escorted from the garden.

Their decision introduces sin into the human race and keeps us from community with God.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

*The Story,* pg. 8; *Genesis 6:5-6 NIV*

At this moment God gives a promise and launches a plan to get us back.

So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

*The Story,* pg. 8; *Genesis 6:7-8 NIV*

The rest of the Bible is God’s story of how he kept that promise and made it possible for us to enter a loving relationship with Him.

THE STORY CHAPTER 1

The Beginning of Life as We Know It

Randy Frazee

Oak Hills Church, San Antonio, TX

September 10-11, 2016

**To view The Story Chapter 1 sermon video,** [**CLICK HERE**](http://media.oakhillschurch.com/default.aspx?page=3679&item=541)**.**

**Opener**

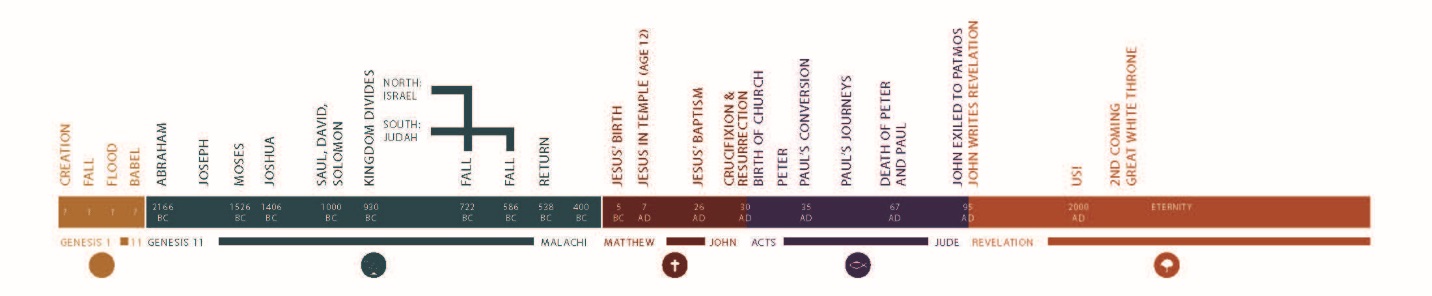
At Sunday School they were learning how God created everything, including human beings. Johnny was especially intent when the teacher told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs.  
      Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, "Johnny, what is the matter?"  
      Johnny responded, "I have pain in my side. I think I'm having a wife."

There was another little boy who went to visit his grandmother. As she was in the kitchen making lunch, the little boy was thumbing through the pages of the family Bible that sat on the coffee table. As he turned the pages all of a sudden a finely-pressed leaf fell out of the Bible onto the floor. Without missing a beat, the little boy shouted out with excitement into the kitchen, “Grandma, I think I just found Adam’s suit!”

Today we begin Chapter 1 of The Story. As we work through this together, Adam’s suit may not fall off the pages but I tell you what will – God’s truth will fall off the pages, and his truth will change your life. Anybody up for some good, life-changing truth?

**Introduction**

*Reveal the timeline poster. Refer to it during the message.*

**

*NOTE: Randy had a 12-foot-long poster made of the complete timeline of The Story, showing the 5 Movements. The files for the timeline, which include the original Adobe Illustrator files and a version that can be projected as a slide, are available on the Communications page in the Online Resource Library.*

We are embarking on a journey for over 31 weeks, and it’s going to take us from the beginning of God’s story to the end, the greatest story ever told. We have The Story broken into 5 smaller movements:

1. The story of the Garden
2. The story of Israel
3. The story of Jesus
4. The story of the Church
5. The story of the New Garden (back where we started)

We have created an app for you. Simply go to your App Store and search for “sharethestory” and this screen will appear:



Download it and you will get a summary paragraph for each of the five movements of God’s Story so you can understand what the story of the Bible is all about. Our hope is that you will memorize each of these paragraphs so that you will be able to share with someone else what God’s story is. We have had thousands of people download the app, and we are able to track your progress as you memorize the different movements, and as of last week, before we have even gotten started, we have had 275 people memorize the first movement. Actually, as of this morning it is 276, because my wife chose me as her accountability partner, and this morning she recited the first movement to me, and as her accountability partner, I went in and checked *COMPLETE.*

Today I want to unpack the paragraph that summarizes Movement 1.

**Movement 1: The Garden**

The first sentence of the paragraph about Movement 1 reads,

In the Upper Story, God creates the Lower Story.

If you brought your copy of The Story with you, or you brought your Bible, turn to Page 1 in The Story, or Genesis Chapter 1 in your Bible, as we uncover the first activity in the story of the Garden called, Creation.

**Creation**

The very first sentence of the Bible is powerful, and many of you have it memorized. Let’s read it together.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

*The Story,* pg. 1; *Genesis 1:1 NIV*

In the first four words of the story, we are already introduced to the main character of The Story – God himself. Everyone and everything else finds their life and breath and being from him. How do I know this? Because the next seven words tell us: God created the heavens and the earth.

I want to pause here and let you know that Genesis 1-2 is not intended to be a science book that uncovers the age of the earth or even the natural process that God used to pull it off. God could have used these chapters as a science book. He has a way in which he pulled all of this off, and he could have told us. But that is not the intent of Genesis 1-2.

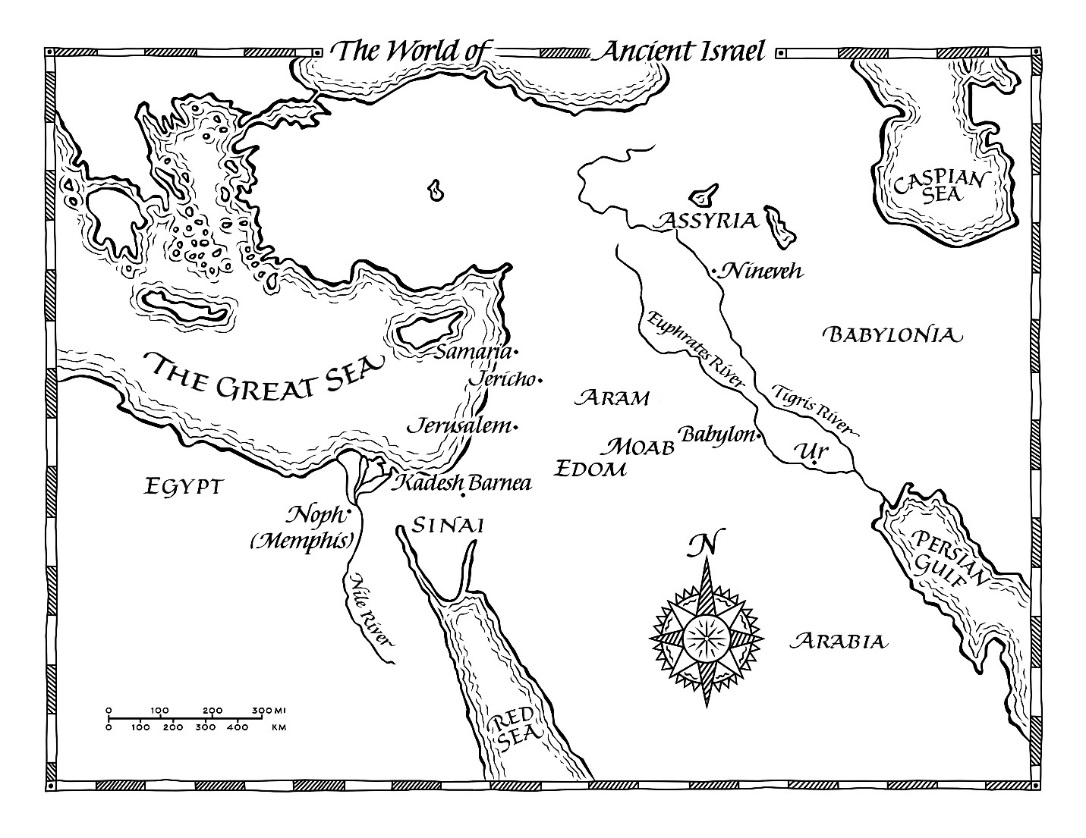
From my study and point of view it is completely appropriate to hold to a young earth creationism point of view, which means God created the earth in six earth-bound days, therefore leaving our earth rather young but with the appearance of age. Sort of like today, when teenagers buy a pair of jeans with the appearance of age – a brand-new pair of jeans, whitewashed, with holes all over them. Doesn’t make any sense to me, but God could have done creation that way.

OR, you could hold the view on the other end, called theistic evolution, which suggests there is a gap of millions of years between Genesis 1:2 and 1:3, or that each of the six days represents a longer period of time than 24 earth-bound hours. In my opinion, neither view undermines the purpose and authority of Scripture.

The main point you need to embrace is that God is behind creation. The Story starts with a big bang, but it is not an accident, or by chance. We need to conclude that God started with nothing and created all we can see and everything we cannot see. Once you conclude that there is a Creator God, frankly he can do what he wants, whether it’s over a billion years or in a nanosecond. Genesis 1 and 2 has less to do with your view of creation and science and more to do with embracing a proper view of God himself.

Now we move to the whole point of creation: Why did God do all of this? It comes down to a magnificent garden God created called Eden that the Bible tells us is located where the Tigris and the Euphrates River intersect down by the Persian Gulf in modern day Iraq.

*Open The Story to the front map, and point to the spot. Invite people to draw a tree to indicate the location of the Garden of Eden. This map is provided in a zip file in the Resource Library on the Weekend Services page called “Maps to Use as Sermon Visuals.”*

**

In this garden God places his crowning achievement, the apple of his eye – he creates us. God created all of the universe and the 100 billion galaxies we have found to date to display his glory and he does his best work right here in the Hill Country of Texas, in my opinion. But his ultimate objective comes down to who he created and put in that garden – man and woman, Adam and Eve.

Which leads to our second sentence.

His vision is to come down and be with us in a beautiful garden.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the community of God, simply desires to come down and do life with the community of humanity. God is all about family. In the first pages of the Bible, we see what matters most to him is relationships.

But God wants to know if Adam and Eve embrace the same vision. So, he instills in Adam and Eve something that is different from the rest of creation; he instills within humans the freedom to choose. To give Adam and Eve a way to declare their decision, he places two trees in the middle of the garden – The Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they ate from the Tree of Life it would signal to God they embrace his vision of life together; if they ate from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would be signaling to God they were rejecting his vision. That leads us to the second part in the story of the Garden.

**Fall**

The next sentence reads:

The first two people reject God’s vision and are escorted from the garden.

They ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Which leads us to the 4th sentence:

Their decision introduces sin into the human race and keeps us from community with God.

The Bible tells us that the moment Adam and Eve took of the forbidden fruit. (By the way, scholars and psychologists have gotten together and delved more deeply into the nature of the fruit, and they have declared it was not an apple after all. Psychologists have concluded there is no way a woman was going to give up everything for an apple. They have now concluded more accurately that the forbidden fruit was chocolate.) When they bit into the apple, they declared their decision, and at that point, something changed in their nature. Sin began to run through their bloodstream.

They now have two choices, signified by the name of the tree – the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Before, Adam and Eve faced all of their decisions with only one option in mind, but now, and for us as well, there are two options. There’s the good option that is right, moral, good for the sake of others, and there’s the other option that is warring within us, the evil choice, which is immoral, all about me getting what I want at the expense of others. That’s one of the best definitions of sin there is, and Adam and Eve are now faced with that warring within.

We get the signal this has occurred by asking, “What is the very first thing Adam and Eve do after they bite into the forbidden fruit?” The Bible says they clothed themselves with fig leaves. Why? Now they are looking at each other, and instead of having just good thoughts about each other, now an evil thought emerges. For the first time they feel shame and they feel vulnerable. They cover up to protect themselves from the other person, and we have been in this defensive mode ever since.

**Cain & Abel**

The Bible tells us that this single decision affects all of us, even today. How do we know this? On page 7 of The Story or in Genesis 4 we are introduced to Adam and Eve’s two boys, Cain and Abel. God is pleased with Abel’s sacrifice but not with Cain’s. Cain has two choices. One choice would be to say, “I need to learn from my brother Abel about how to bring a good sacrifice to God so I can be more pleasing to God.” We know from the story that jealousy and anger rise in Cain’s spirit, so much so that God visits him and says to him in Genesis 4:7, “…sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” That day, Cain chose evil, and he killed his brother, signifying something very important: The sin nature is passed down automatically through the seed of the father. And Cain acted on it.

The psalmist writes:

Surely I was sinful at birth,

sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

*Psalm 51:5*

It is a very difficult Biblical principal to wrap your head around, but just like my dad gave me his bad cholesterol, he also gave me his sin nature which he got from his dad, who got it from his dad, all the way back to Adam. It doesn’t seem fair, but we must embrace it.

Raise your hand if you’re a human being. If you’re a human being, it means you’re descended from Adam, which means from the womb of your mother you were conceived with this sin nature. This sin nature keeps us from God and the garden, because the way we treat people is not appropriate for the beautiful life in the garden.

Here is what we will see over and over again in the story – when humanity is left alone apart from God, the expressions of evil gets worse and worse. This is precisely what happens in the unfolding of the first pages of the Bible. From Cain killing his own brother to the time of the flood, sin escalates to the point of the despicable.

Genesis 6 records an act that is not in The Story but it is in the Bible, where some believe evil male angels are taking human women and producing an offspring called *Nephilim*. It’s hard to wrap our minds around this, but what we know is that it is a deplorable act, against the design and pattern of God. Let me give you a modern-day example. It is like society saying it is okay for boys to go into a girls’ bathroom. It’s the same thing, where something so outside of the design and pattern of God is being suggested by people who don’t even think it’s wrong. Whenever society gets to that place, God has to intervene, and this is exactly what he does.

On the top of page 8 of The Story or Genesis 6:5-6:

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

*The Story,* pg. 8; *Genesis 6:5-6 NIV*

This is the most awful declaration we can hear from the lips of God. He regrets that he made us.

But…the story doesn’t end here. We’re going to discover that God wants us back. Even in the state of our wickedness. There are going to be many things I’ll be able to give you insight into and unpack for you about the Bible as we journey over these 31 weeks, but one thing I’m going to have a hard time helping you understand is, WHY. Why does God love us and pursue us so severely in our state of rebellion against him? Which leads us to the next part of this Movement.

**Flood**

At this moment God gives a promise and launches a plan to get us back.

The question is, How? God has Plan A to get us back that makes perfect, logical sense. Look at the next verse on page 8 or Genesis 6:7-8:

So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

*The Story,* pg. 8; *Genesis 6:7-8 NIV*

The plan makes complete sense. Let’s start over. Let’s wipe out everyone because the evil has gotten so significant and we’ll start over with our very best guy in the human race – a guy named Noah. If we start over with the best guy, let’s see if we end up with a better end-product. So, that’s what he does. Noah builds a gargantuan ark and collects all the animals and his family and closes up the door. A massive flood hits the earth, wiping out everyone and everything except Noah, his family and the animals. When it is all over, they open the door of the ark, they step out and start to rebuild, not from the seed of Adam, but from the seed of Noah. They’re going to see if this fixes the problem and leads us back to God.

Did Plan A work in getting us back to God? Nope. One really big problem – Noah and his family took the sin virus from Adam, they took it on the boat with them, and walked off the boat with it. It was only a matter of time until sin raised its ugly head again. And it did in what happened right after the Flood.

The Story doesn’t cover this part of the story but it is found in Genesis 9:20-23. One night Noah gets drunk from wine he pressed from vineyards he planted. He passes out naked inside of his tent. One of his sons named Ham walks in on his dad and finds him naked. He’s got two choices. A good choice would be to covering his father up and save him from humiliation. Or, he could make the evil choice, which would be to go out of the tent and tell his brothers and bring them back in to make a mockery of his dad. He choice was evil; he went out and got his brothers. They, however, out of respect, walked in backwards with a blanket and covered the naked body of their dad without looking at him. They chose good that day, but Ham disgraced his father. It may appear to be a small matter but it signals very clearly that the sin nature is still resident within all humanity, and Plan A didn’t work.

As a matter of fact, God says, and I paraphrase, “This plan didn’t work; we don’t ever need to do a flood again.” We had the most recorded rainfall in Texas during the month of August, 2016, since we started keeping records in 1914. Many people were wondering if it was ever going to stop. But, God promised he wouldn’t flood the earth again, and he gave us the rainbow to remind us of this promise. I remember going down the street after a torrential downpour, and there was a beautiful rainbow that crossed over the street, which reminded me that God keeps his promise. But keep in mind the promise is not based on the fact that we deserve it, because we don’t. The promise was made because Plan A *didn’t work* in accomplishing God’s desire to get us back into the Garden and restoring our relationship with him.

**Babel**

Just like sin escalated after Adam, so it happens again after Noah. Over time, after the flood, when humanity is left alone apart from God, evil always escalates. This time, as we come to the end of this first Movement, in Chapter 11 of Genesis, we see this in the creation of the Tower of Babel. At this time everyone spoke one language. They got together in one location to build a tower to the heavens for the purpose of building a name for themselves totally apart from any allegiance to God. If they are successful, this will seal the deal, and keep them eternally separated from God.

God steps in, and he graciously confuses their language to weaken their ability to work together to save them from themselves. God is going to do this throughout human history; whenever humanity escalates in its evil, such that it’s going to change the outcome of God’s story, the one he promises to write from beginning to end, he always intervenes in the story, and does something. In this case, he enters into their story, he confuses their language, and the project called the Tower of Babel fails, thank God – no, really, ‘thank God!” because he’s the one who intervened.

**Conclusion**

So God says, Plan A didn’t work. Time for Plan B.

What will it take to get us back into the Garden with God? What will God do next? Remember the story at the beginning of the message about Adam’s suit falling off the pages of the Bible? In that story, there is a clue that God has given us.

Do you recall what God did for Adam and Eve? Look on bottom of page 6 or Genesis 3:21. He replaces their fig leaves with the skin of an animal to cover their nakedness. He is signaling to us that the solution to getting you back and covering your sin is going to require the shedding of blood. You see where this is going?

Which leads us to the last sentence…

The rest of the Bible is God’s story of how he kept that promise and made it possible for us to enter a loving relationship with Him.

The Story is just beginning. Plan B, which in reality was always God’s Plan A, is going to work. Stick around, let it unfold chapter after chapter, and you’re going to see the extent to which God went to get you back, if you want it.

*PRAY*