

RESTLESS
STUDY

BECAUSE YOU WERE
MADE FOR MORE

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GOD'S STORY :: 1

A blackboard with the words "GOD'S STORY" written in white chalk. The blackboard is tilted and occupies the middle section of the image. The background of the entire image is yellow, with a black horizontal band behind the blackboard. The text "GOD'S STORY" is written in a large, white, hand-drawn font. To the right of the blackboard, there are faint, horizontal lines, possibly from a notebook or another surface.

GOD'S STORY

*The place where your restless soul meets God is the
place where nothing ever feels small again.*

My son Cooper was born and lived three and a half years of his life in Africa. He is five now and is wrestling with the fact that his skin color is a few—strike that—*many* shades darker than the rest of his family's. He keeps running his hand up and down my arm and asking me, "Where can we go, so I can get skin like this?"

He's not speaking with knowledge of the painful history of his skin color in our country yet. Right now he just wants to be like his family. His identity is unique in our family. He has a heritage that each of us appreciates deeply, but we do not share it. So he quietly asks me as we lay in bed before prayers:

"Why did God make me born in Africa?"

"Why did God put me in another mommy's tummy?"

"Why did God make me?"

I can't deny that the answers to many of my son's questions are painful. Abandonment usually undergirds the beautiful tragedy of adoption. Even though he finds himself in a loving family now, we can never make that painful truth go away.

It's usually dark as we lay in bed to pray and talk. Cooper doesn't know that every time he asks me these questions, I have tears running down my face as I preach my guts out in his bottom bunk:

"Not one part of you is by accident, Cooper. God made you and placed you in your African mama's tummy. He knew even then that I would be

your forever mama and we would be your forever family. We were made for you and you were made for us.

“Cooper, you were made to show the world God. Everything that God gives you, your Africa, your America, your dark skin and your strong legs, your hurts, your words, your blessings, your smart mind . . . everything you have is to use for God while you are here.

“And God will show you how. Soon we will be in heaven with God forever, but while we are here now, we have to use all we have for God.”

My five-year-old needs to know his life was on purpose and for a purpose. He wants to know he wasn't an accident. I can't take away the pain of his story, but I can tell him there is purpose. We all want to know we are not accidents. We all want to know our stories are going somewhere on purpose.

Something deep down inside us is made to live for a story bigger than ourselves—the story of the one who made us. Any other version of this story will consistently feel shallow and empty.

He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.

ECCLESIASTES 3:11 NIV 1984

Cooper will never make sense of his life until he understands that eternal story, and the God who made him and placed him in his spot. It's a big earth, and when Cooper studies it, he sees countries separated by a huge ocean and he feels lost and small in it.

I think a lot of us feel lost and small.

And because of that we desperately want to find “God’s will for me.” We want to know that we exist on purpose and for a purpose. We often try to find “God’s will for me” without simply first understanding God’s will. But we will only ever discover his will for us within God’s will for this earth, for eternity, and for his people. We were made for this story—his story. And yes, he wrote little parts for each of us in his story. Or else we wouldn’t exist.

STUDY ::

Read Hebrews 10:36–12:3

RESPOND

In your own words summarize the story of God's work on earth as told in Hebrews 10:36–12:3.

What was the most defining thing about these men and women?

Define faith. (Hebrews 11:1)

In what different ways did the people in those verses live out their faith?

Describe the actions of someone without faith.
(Hebrews 10:38–39)

Describe some of the things that happen because of faith in these lives. (Hebrews 11)

The author of Hebrews has a goal for the readers. He wants them to understand the history of God on earth for a reason. What is his goal in sharing this history of faith? (Hebrews 12:1–3)

What do you think was the main thing God was accomplishing on earth through these generations of people?

WHAT IS GOD AFTER?

My little Cooper, Rahab, Oprah, Abraham Lincoln, Alexander the Great, and every other single human on the face of the earth has found his or her story in the confines of God's story. The history of the world fits in a small crevice of the history of God. And throughout that history, God is after one great purpose. And every one of our unique callings will fit into this one.

God is most after his glory.

Glory is the visible expression of God's character on this earth.

So just as Abraham in faith followed God into the wilderness, bringing God glory, when you bravely obey or sacrifice or risk in faith to follow God, you bring him glory.

God's chief pursuit is that his glory, through us, would fill the earth. Everyone of our unique callings will display hints of the glory of our God.

THE PROBLEM

We ache to be a part of something great, and it makes us nervous at the same time. We were built for this, but we all fight hundreds of mixed motives and fears.

Jesus said of us, "Whoever believes in me . . . they will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12). It almost sounds blasphemous to do even greater things than Jesus. We rarely say it, but often when we start to have great thoughts or visions, we quickly dismiss them, afraid that we may become arrogant or prideful. Or much worse, simply that we would *appear* prideful.

* * *

God gave man two commands: be fruitful and fill the earth. He kept repeating this phrase in history in a beautiful effort to fill the earth with his image through us—an earth full of the glory of God.

Instead of filling the earth with God's glory, humans they came together to build a tower and to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11). John Piper says of this tower and of our souls, "Man was made to rely on God and give him glory. Instead man chose to rely on himself and seek his own glory—to make a name for himself."¹

We all will have to fight this. Perhaps it is the biggest hurdle we must cross to living our purposes. At the base of our souls, are we building for God or us?

Take just a minute and pray. Ask God to reveal your motives.

What is the driving force of your life?

1. John Piper, "God Created Us for His Glory," Desiring God (blog), July 27, 1980. www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/god-created-us-for-his-glory.

Whatever you just wrote, within this great story, God provided the remedy to our souls. To overcome us, God would make a great sacrifice.

[Christ] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

HEBREWS 1:3 ESV

Christ in us would be the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). For the joy set before him, he endured the cross. It is a joy that we share. The joy of a forever with a God who is entirely good and who chose us to become his children. The whole earth will be full of his glory; evil will be crushed. Until then we run, showing God to the world and not growing weary.

This history of faith we read about in Hebrews is there because God wants us to see we have a part in his story. He wants us to live motivated by faith in the unseen, and to run.

So we fight the desire to build our own towers. When we do the great things he prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10), but we do them in and through and for the name and glory of God.

GREATER THINGS

We were made to do great things, but we cannot live with motives unchecked. If our motives are the glory of God, we have tremendous freedom to dream with hearts that are completely his.

I want to have a faith that God can move through.

I want Cooper to understand he isn't just made for a purpose; he was placed in this time and space for the greatest imaginable purpose. He will show God to a world that doesn't know him, in his beautiful and unique way. He will bring light to darkness. He will assemble the pieces of his life not into a tower for his name that would only crumble, but he will assemble them for the name and glory of the one God Almighty.

Well, he's five, and currently we are working on not throwing rocks, but that's the hope. That's the prayer. That's the sermon he's going to keep hearing.

Our hearts must be completely his before we can start to dream.

For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

2 CHRONICLES 16:9 NASB

JOHN 17

JESUS PRAYS TO BE GLORIFIED

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within

them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

WHO ARE YOU, LORD?



WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR ME?

REFLECT

[Christ] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature . . .

HEBREWS 1:3 ESV

If Christ is the exact imprint of God’s nature, use the chart below and on the next page to describe how Christ reacted to each thing listed, using your knowledge of Christ’s story and the Bible verses you just read for guidance. In the far-right column, write a few descriptive words about what those actions tell us about God’s nature.

	CHRIST’S ACTION TOWARD . . .	GOD’S NATURE
Temptation	he fought it and was victorious over it (see Mark 1:13)	persevering, holy
Religiousness		
Sinners		

Sickness		
Forgiveness		
The devil		
This life		
Heaven		
Money		

IMAGINE

Draw an image of the glory of God. This is an impossibly abstract assignment. But I think sometimes we never analyze abstract concepts like glory. What does it remind you of? What image comes to mind? What would it look like if we all displayed God's glory here? Use your imagination.

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

HABAKKUK 2:14

DEAL

[God] will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:5

What are some of the mixed motives you need to deal with?

Have your motives ever stopped you from doing something you wanted to do for God? If so, what were those dreams?

Has your fear of *appearing* arrogant every held you back? If so describe it.

We have a lot of freedom to dream, but there is not freedom in our motives. The hidden parts of us are the very most important to God. Two people can accomplish the same thing with different motives and one will please God and one won't. If you realize that you are doing a good thing for a not-so-good purpose, don't despair. Dedicate it to God right now and ask him to commandeer it for his glory.

CONSIDER

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

HEBREWS 11:1

How confident are you that the story of God is real? Explain your answer, and how it affects your life.

How confident are you that Jesus is your savior? Explain your answer, and how that confidence or absence of it affects your life.

How confident are you that God has specific purposes for you in his story? Explain. What difference has that made to you?

Talk about it.

I'll be honest. I have given my life to God's story, and there are still days I wonder if it is all real. It's okay if you waver sometimes. God holds us in place with him; we don't hold ourselves. Where your faith is weak, pray and ask him for more. "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

CONCLUSION

I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

JOHN 17:4

Jesus said this before he died.

I want to say that before I die too.

I recently lay in my hotel room listening as Larry King interviewed Daniel Radcliffe about the final Harry Potter movie. Daniel said a beautiful thing about his role in these epic films. “I always knew that anyone who was given this role would have the same fame. It was never about me. It was about this franchise. I was simply a part of something bigger.”²

I teared up when I heard it. I had spent the day meeting and greeting important people in the book world, in some small ways trying to become important.

2. *Larry King Live*, July 10, 2011, CNN.

And after a day of trying to become important, my heart broke as I realized I was only a small part of an epic story—the very most successful franchise that ever was. And anyone could play my part. I was reading lines of a story written before creation, and I was but a breath, playing my tiny part in it. It would never be me that was important. I would simply play the part that was given to me.

Isaiah 40 describes the enormity of a God who sits above the circle of the earth; its inhabitants are like grass to him. “All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field” (v. 6). It is not that we are insignificant. Rather, he is so significant that comparatively, we are but a breath.

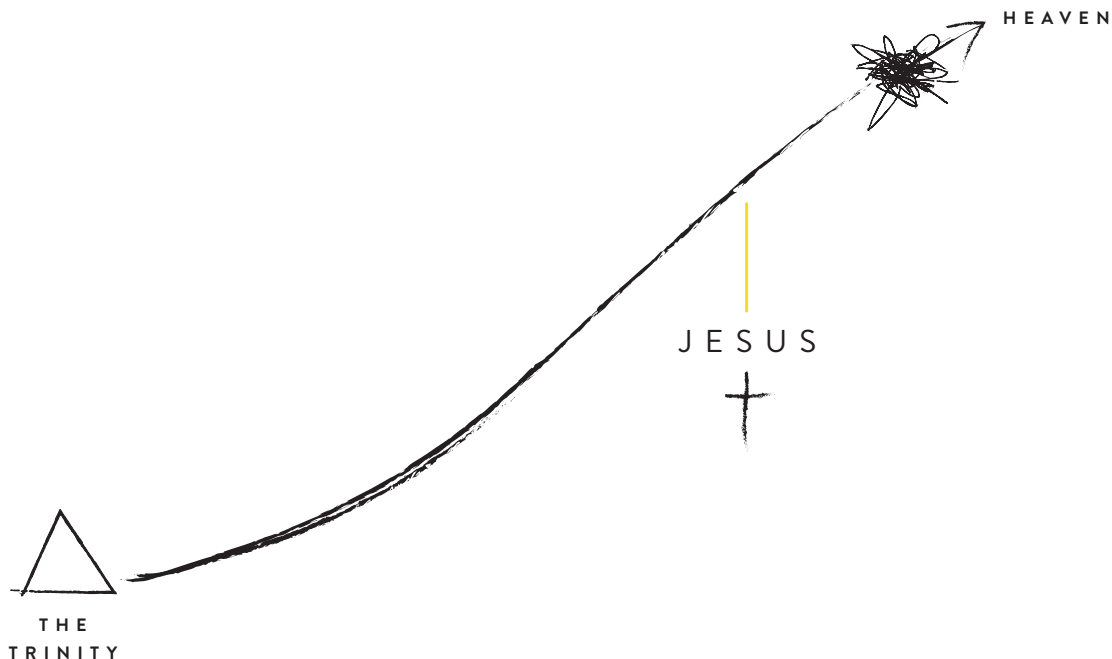
He breathes in and out, and a generation has already passed away.

I have lived a lot of my life on the back row fearing that if I dream or live great dreams I may steal glory from God. Who am I to even think such a thing? As my friend Christine Caine says, “Who am I to dare think, that on my very best day, I could ever take one little piece of the glory of God?”

So instead of fearing or craving greatness, crave God and run your guts out.

NOTES

The arrow below represents God's story, beginning with the Trinity and creation, and ending (at least from your viewpoint) when you meet him in heaven. Based on the scriptures we've studied and your own experience of the Bible, fill in more key points on the time line of the story of God. Or fill it with notes from the video talk.



NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.