



Week two =
the beginning of everything



You Are Here

You Are Here tells the story of the Bible in its own words. It comes in eight parts, and is meant to be read aloud and shared with friends.

Week two – the beginning of everything

Introduction

Session one was all about stories and your understanding of the story the Bible tells. Now we start on the Bible itself. This is not a study, or a discussion. It is a story.

There are two parts to the session:

1. The first is a short imagination exercise. You'll know best whether it will work well with your group or not, so it is entirely optional. It is designed to get you in the right frame of mind to hear the story, to relax and slow down, and get the imagination working. If you don't wish to use it, just skip straight to part two.
2. The main part of the session is the story. Read it aloud, and pause to talk about what you are hearing when it feels appropriate.

Activity 1: Backwards (optional)

Encourage the group to get comfortable, and to close their eyes. You can open them again when the story starts, and begin on your workbooks. Then read the following, nice and slowly:

With your eyes closed, breathe deep. Imagine you are moving backwards, gently, sinking gently into your chair. It's a comfortable feeling, warm, embracing. You keep sinking, gently backwards, through your chair, and out the other side ... You realize you are not alone. Everything else is sinking gently backwards too.

The walls of the room are backing gently away. Out in the street, cars are driving backwards up the street and vanishing around the corner ... Overhead, the glinting aeroplanes pause and then reverse, rubbing out their own white lines across the sky.

You realize that you are sinking backwards through time. The last hour, today, yesterday, last weekend, the days begin to flash past. You are sinking into history.

Before you know it a decade is gone. You see the fireworks of the Millennium celebrations. And then another decade, the fall of the Berlin wall. Faster now, you see cities shrinking and motorways turning back into little roads. There are propeller planes overhead ... and now airships.

You see smoke sucked back into chimneys and factories dismantled, the industrial revolution undone. You see armies marching backwards across Europe, sailing ships. Columbus un-discovers America. You see thatched cottages. Windmills. You see wheat fields turning back into forest ... castles returned to the quarries ... pyramids back into sand.

You sink deeper still. You hardly recognise the world now, stripped of its empires and civilizations. Mountains sink back into the ground ... The continents themselves shift and combine ... there is a flash of light and suddenly all is stars.

One by one, the stars blink out ... and you are in empty space, weightless.

Pause

And while everyone is still silent, move straight into this week's story:

We are here, at the beginning of history

And it starts like this:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that it was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." Together these made up one day.

And God said, "Let there be space between the waters, to separate water from water." And so it was. God made this space to separate the waters above from the waters below. And God called the space "sky." This happened on the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky be gathered into one place so dry ground may appear." And so it was. God named the dry ground "land" and the water "seas." And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the land burst forth with every sort of grass and seed-bearing plant. And let there be trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. The seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And so it was. The land was filled with seed-bearing plants and trees, and their seeds produced plants and trees of like kind. And God saw that it was good. This all happened on the third day.

Genesis 1:1-13

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And God said, "Let bright lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs to mark off the seasons, the days, and the years. Let their light shine down upon the earth." And so it was. For God made two great lights, the sun and the moon, to shine down upon the earth. The greater one, the sun, presides during the day; the lesser one, the moon, presides through the night. He also made the stars. God set these lights in the heavens to light the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. This all happened on the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." So God created great sea creatures and every sort of fish and every kind of bird. And God saw that it was good. Then God blessed them, saying, "Let the fish multiply and fill the oceans. Let the birds increase and fill the earth." This all happened on the fifth day. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of animal--livestock, small animals, and wildlife." And so it was. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to reproduce more of its own kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:14-25

Enter humanity

Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals."

So God created people in his own image;
God patterned them after himself;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals."

And God said, "Look! I have given you the seed-bearing plants throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. And I have given all the grasses and other green plants to the animals and birds for their food." And so it was.



Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was excellent in every way. This all happened on the sixth day.

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day, having finished his task, God rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from his work of creation.

Genesis 1:26-31, 2:1-3

The garden of Eden

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it. But the LORD God gave him this warning: "You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die."

And the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him." So the LORD God formed from the soil every kind of animal and bird. He brought them to Adam to see what he would call them, and Adam chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, birds, and wild animals. But still there was no companion suitable for him. So the LORD God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam's ribs and closed up the place from which he had taken it. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam.



"At last!" Adam exclaimed. "She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken out of a man." This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame.

Genesis 2:4-9,15-25

Creation isn't ancient history, because we are here...

Born into a beautiful world, in the image of its creator, and called in turn to care and tend for it. We are here, invited to enjoy the best of creation; to join in, to live and love and flourish.

Adam and Eve's choice

Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the LORD God had made. "Really?" he asked the woman. "Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?"

"Of course we may eat it," the woman told him. "It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die."

"You won't die!" the serpent hissed. "God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil."

The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too.

At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves.

Genesis 3:1-7

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God looks for Adam and Eve

Toward evening they heard the LORD God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. The LORD God called to Adam, "Where are you?"

He replied, "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

"Yes," Adam admitted, "but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God asked the woman, "How could you do such a thing?"

"The serpent tricked me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."



The knowledge of good and evil

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you will be punished. You are singled out from all the domestic and wild animals of the whole earth to be cursed. You will grovel in the dust as long as you live, crawling along on your belly. From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Then he said to the woman, "You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband, he will be your master."

And to Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return."

Then Adam named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all people everywhere. And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

Then the LORD God said, "The people have become as we are, knowing everything, both good and evil. What if they eat the fruit of the tree of life? Then they will live forever!" So the LORD God banished Adam and his wife from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. After banishing them from the

garden, the LORD God stationed mighty angelic beings to the east of Eden. And a flaming sword flashed back and forth, guarding the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:8-24

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Adam and Eve's sons

Now Adam slept with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When the time came, she gave birth to Cain, and she said, "With the LORD's help, I have brought forth a man!" Later she gave birth to a second son and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain was a farmer. At harvest time Cain brought to the LORD a gift of his farm produce, while Abel brought several choice lambs from the best of his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his offering, but he did not accept Cain and his offering. This made Cain very angry and dejected.

"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked him. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it."

Later Cain suggested to his brother, Abel, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were there, Cain attacked and killed his brother.

Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"



"I don't know!" Cain retorted. "Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?"

But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen - your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! You are hereby banished from the ground you have defiled with your brother's blood. No longer will it yield abundant crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless fugitive on the earth, constantly wandering from place to place."

Genesis 4:1-12

Adam slept with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth, for she said, "God has granted me another son in place of Abel, the one Cain killed"...

It was during his lifetime that people first began to worship the LORD.

Genesis 4:25-26

The fall wasn't a one-off event, because we are here...

Sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, cast out from the garden, cut off from God. Here we are in a world of distrust, injustice, and violence, living with the consequences of our foolishness.

But, we are not forgotten. Still loved, still longed for, we are heirs to a promise, and waiting for our deliverance.

God is sorry

The human population grew rapidly and began to spread, but Cain's murder was not the last. Everywhere the people went, their evil deeds went with them.

Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart. And the LORD said, "I will completely wipe out this human race that I have created. Yes, and I will destroy all the animals and birds, too. I am sorry I ever made them."

But Noah found favour with the LORD.

Genesis 6:5-9

The story of Noah

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.

Now the earth had become corrupt in God's sight, and it was filled with violence. God observed all this corruption in the world, and he saw violence and depravity everywhere.

So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Yes, I will wipe them all from the face of the earth!

"Make a boat from resinous wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Construct an opening all the way around the boat, 18 inches below the roof. Then put three decks inside the boat—bottom, middle, and upper—and put a door in the side.

"Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing. Everything on earth will die! But I solemnly swear to keep you safe in the boat, with your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. Pairs of each kind of bird and each kind of animal, large and small alike, will come to you to be kept alive. And remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals."

So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

Gen 6:11-22



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How God saved Noah

When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, the underground waters burst forth on the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights. But Noah had gone into the boat that very day with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of breathing animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds and flying insects of every kind. Two by two they came into the boat, male and female, just as God had commanded. Then the LORD shut them in.

For forty days the floods prevailed, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, standing more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks. All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all kinds of small animals, and all the people. Everything died that breathed and lived on dry land. Every living thing on the earth was wiped out—people, animals both large and small, and birds. They were all destroyed, and only Noah was left alive, along with those who were with him in the boat. And the water covered the earth for 150 days.

Genesis 7:11-24



A new start

But God remembered Noah and all the animals in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the waters, and the floods began to disappear. The underground water sources ceased their gushing, and the torrential rains stopped. So the flood gradually began to recede.

Finally, when Noah was 601 years old, ten and a half months after the flood began, Noah lifted back the cover to look. The water was drying up. Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry! Then God said to Noah, "Leave the boat, all of you. Release all the animals and birds so they can breed and reproduce in great numbers." So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. And all the various kinds of animals and birds came out, pair by pair.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and sacrificed on it the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. And the LORD was pleased with the sacrifice and said to himself, "I will never again curse the earth, destroying all living things, even though people's thoughts and actions are bent toward evil from childhood. As long as the earth remains, there will be springtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night."

Genesis 8:1-3, 13-22

A blessing and a promise

God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth."



And God said, "I am giving you a sign as evidence of my eternal covenant with you and all living creatures. I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my permanent promise to you and to all the earth. When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds, and I will remember my covenant with you and with everything that lives. Never again will there be a flood that will destroy all life. When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth." Then God said to Noah, "Yes, this is the sign of my covenant with all the creatures of the earth."

Genesis 9:1,12-17

Nothing imperfect lasts forever. Civilisations rise and fall, justice is done, and life is brought back into balance.

And the cycle starts again, the new out of the old. Day follows night, spring follows winter, life from death, one new start after another.

Here we are, in a world that sings resurrection.

Enter Abram

Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. All the peoples of the earth came from these three sons, spreading out and filling the land again. One of Shem's descendants was called Abram. Abram was a wealthy man, but he had no children, because his wife Sarai was barren.

Then the LORD told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed him.

Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. He took his wife, Sarai, and all his wealth - his livestock and all the people who had joined his household at Haran — and finally arrived in Canaan.

Genesis 12:1-5

Promised land

The LORD said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring as a permanent possession. And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted! Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you."

Genesis 13:14-17



Promised son

Afterwards the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? ... You have given me no children, so one of my servants will have to be my heir."

Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own to inherit everything I am giving you." Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that--too many to count!" And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith.

But Sarai, Abram's wife, had no children.

Genesis 15:1-6,16:1

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God made a covenant with Abram

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to make you into a mighty nation."

At this, Abram fell face down in the dust. Then God said to him, "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of not just one nation, but a multitude of nations! What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram; now you will be known as Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. I will give you millions of descendants who will represent many nations. Kings will be among them!

"I will continue this everlasting covenant between us, generation after generation. It will continue between me and your offspring forever. And I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. Yes, I will give all this land of Canaan to you and to your offspring forever. And I will be their God."

Genesis 17:1-8

God promised Abraham a son through Sarai

Then God added, "Regarding Sarai, your wife - her name will no longer be Sarai; from now on you will call her Sarah. And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings will be among her descendants!"



Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of one hundred?" he wondered. "Besides, Sarah is ninety; how could she have a baby?"

But God replied, "Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my everlasting covenant with him and his descendants ... [He] will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year."

Genesis 17:15-17,19,21

Then the LORD did exactly what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant, and she gave a son to Abraham in his old age.

Genesis 21:1-2

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God tests Abraham

Later on God tested Abraham's faith and obedience. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

"Take your son, your only son - yes, Isaac, whom you love so much - and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will point out to you."

The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son Isaac. Then he chopped wood to build a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place where God had told him to go. On the third day of the journey, Abraham saw the place in the distance. "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the young men. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the knife and the fire. As the two of them went on together, Isaac said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son," Abraham replied.

"We have the wood and the fire," said the boy, "but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

"God will provide a lamb, my son," Abraham answered. And they both went on together.

When they arrived at the place where God had told Abraham to go, he built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then he tied Isaac up and laid him on the altar over the wood. And Abraham took the knife and lifted it up to kill his son as a sacrifice to the LORD. At that moment the angel of the LORD shouted to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," he answered. "I'm listening."

"Lay down the knife," the angel said. "Do not hurt the boy in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld even your beloved son from me."

Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering on the altar in place of his son.

Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven, "This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your beloved son, I swear by my own self that I will bless you richly. I will multiply your descendants into countless millions, like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. They will conquer their enemies, and through your descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed - all because you have obeyed me."

Genesis 22:1-18



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The sons of Isaac

Besides Isaac, Abraham had a son called Ishmael, and other children. Abraham lived for 175 years, and when he died he left everything to his son, Isaac.

This is the history of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah. Isaac pleaded with the LORD to give Rebekah a child because she was childless. So the LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and his wife became pregnant with twins. But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the LORD about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

And the LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two rival nations. One nation will be stronger than the other; the descendants of your older son will serve the descendants of your younger son."

And when the time came, the twins were born. The first was very red at birth. He was covered with so much hair that one would think he was wearing a piece of clothing. So they called him Esau. Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they called him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

Genesis 25:19-26

The sons of Jacob

Jacob married and had twelve sons – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph and Benjamin. God blessed Jacob and gave him the name Israel. The nation of Israel was named after him, and the twelve tribes of Israel were named after his sons.

Now Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day he gave Joseph a special gift - a beautiful robe. But his brothers hated Joseph because of their father's partiality. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

One night Joseph had a dream and promptly reported the details to his brothers, causing them to hate him even more. "Listen to this dream," he announced. "We were out in the field tying up bundles of grain. My bundle stood up, and then your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before it!"

"So you are going to be our king, are you?" his brothers taunted. And they hated him all the more for his dream and what he had said.

Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem. When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, "Your brothers are over at Shechem with the flocks. I'm going to send you to them."

"I'm ready to go," Joseph replied.

Genesis 37: 3-8,12-13



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When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance and made plans to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they exclaimed. "Come on, let's kill him and throw him into a deep pit. We can tell our father that a wild animal has eaten him. Then we'll see what becomes of all his dreams!"

But Reuben came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said. "Why should we shed his blood? Let's just throw him alive into this pit here. That way he will die without our having to touch him." Reuben was secretly planning to help Joseph escape, and then he would bring him back to his father.

So when Joseph arrived, they pulled off his beautiful robe and threw him into the pit. This pit was normally used to store water, but it was empty at the time. Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they noticed a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking spices, balm, and myrrh from Gilead to Egypt.

Judah said to the others, "What can we gain by killing our brother? That would just give us a guilty conscience. Let's sell Joseph to those Ishmaelite traders. Let's not be responsible for his death; after all, he is our brother!" And his brothers agreed. So when the traders came by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmaelite traders took him along to Egypt.

Genesis 37:18-28

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Joseph in Egypt

God blessed Joseph in Egypt. God gave him the ability to interpret dreams, and he became an advisor to Pharaoh, the King. Although a slave, Pharaoh put him in charge of the whole country.

Later there was a famine across the whole region. God had revealed to Joseph that this famine would happen, and Joseph had stored grain to prepare for the bad harvests. Soon Joseph's father and brothers had to move to Egypt, because they had no food.

Despite his brothers' betrayal, he forgave them and welcomed them:

Joseph told them, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, to judge and punish you? As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people. No, don't be afraid. Indeed, I myself will take care of you and your families." And he spoke very kindly to them, reassuring them.

So Joseph and his brothers and their families continued to live in Egypt.

Joseph was 110 years old when he died.

"Soon I will die," Joseph told his brothers, "but God will surely come for you, to lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he vowed to give to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Genesis 50:19-22,24

The whole of history belongs to God, but God works it out through individuals. Chosen men and women, then families and communities, set apart as agents of promise.

Promised land, promised sons, God's masterplan in such fragile hands.

But here we are, seven billion individual life stories, each one unique, all overlapping and combining into the one great story of God and creation...

... a story which continues in part two.



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