

SERIES COMPANION

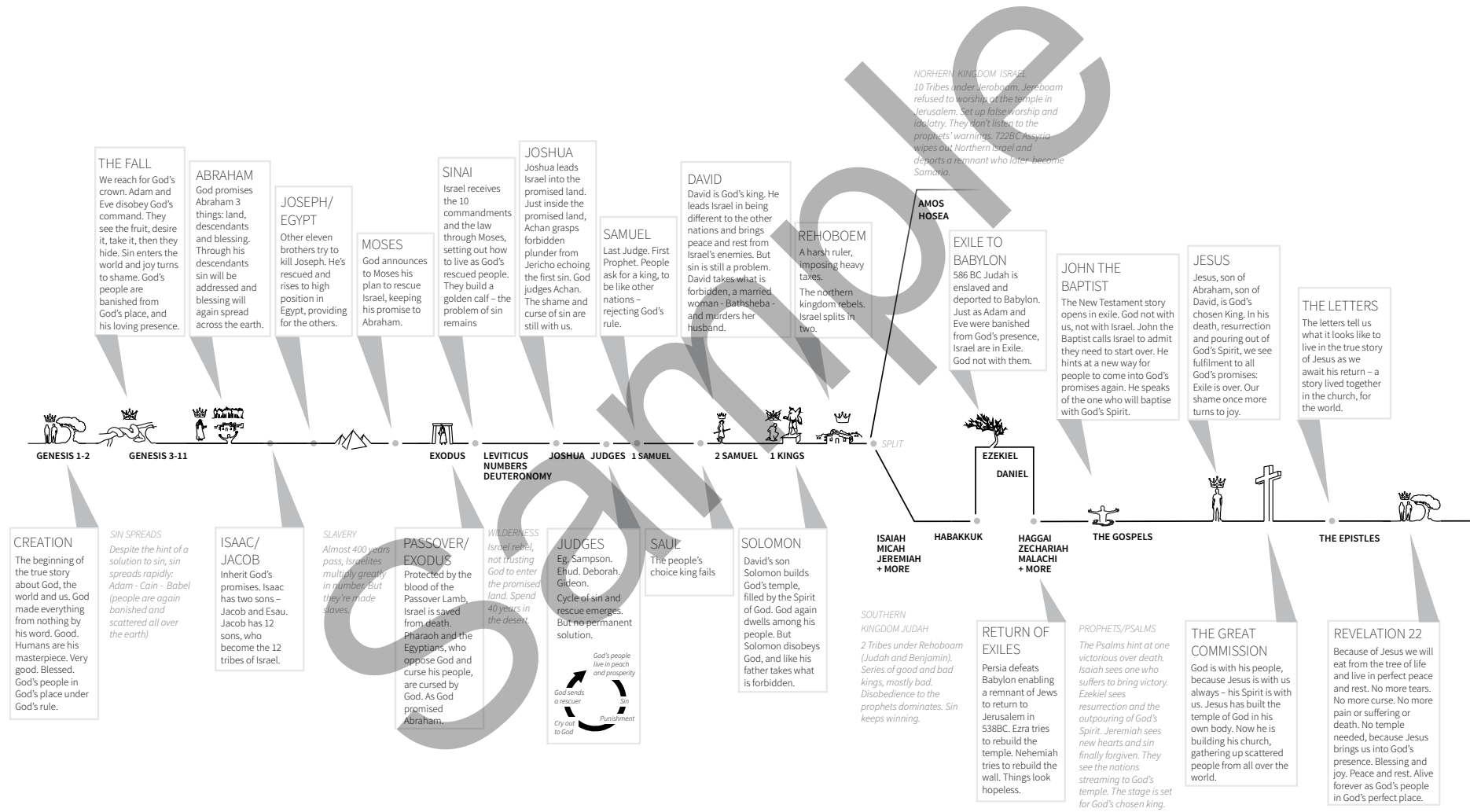
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**BIBLE IN
SEN**

THE TRUE STORY OF GOD, THE WORLD AND US

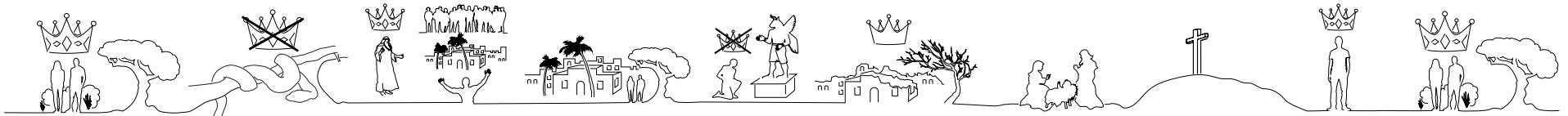
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BIBLE TIMELINE

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The true story of God, the world, and us is a story of sin and shame, redemption and restoration. It is the story of creation and new creation. It is a story of the fallenness and weakness of humankind, and the grace and glory of a loving triune God. It is a story centred on the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the pouring out of his Spirit. It is a story that moves from blessing to curse, to curse removed. It is a story that moves from no shame, to shame, to shame removed.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. – Genesis 2:25

He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” – Genesis 3:10

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” – Revelation 22:14

As we look at the true story of God, the world, and us over this series of studies, we will be taking time each week to consider what the Bible narrative means in our own lives. We will be doing this through the lens of shame. The Bible story itself emphasizes this theme of shame, in that the perfection of Eden is described in Genesis 2:25 as being characterized by ‘no shame’ which allows us to be with God and one another freely. When sin enters the world in Genesis 3, shame enters the world. And only when Jesus enters the world as Saviour can our shame be truly removed, so we might be clothed again in love in the new creation.

INTRODUCTION

There has been much research and writing done on the topic of shame in secular and Christian circles over recent years – for example, Brené Brown (her TED Talks on shame and vulnerability are a good place to start) and books by Christian counsellors such as Ed Welch (Shame Interrupted) and Curt Thompson (The Soul of Shame). When we grow to understand shame, and how it is at work in our lives, so also we come to better understand what it means to live in the “now but not yet” period of God’s story. We know the grace and forgiveness of God through Jesus, but we don’t yet know perfection. We continue to live in a fallen world, as fallen imperfect people. Understanding shame, and the role it continues to play in our lives, and being willing to bring our shame before God and trusted others, can be a powerful tool in allowing the true, powerful story of God’s redemption of this world to change our story.

You may hear people say that one of the main differences between our culture (in the west) and other cultures is that we don’t live in a shame-honour culture. They say ours is a guilt culture. What’s true is that different cultures manifest shame and guilt in their own ways. In eastern cultures shame attaches to a whole community, which makes shame a very public and powerful force in those cultures. But it’s not as if guilt is a foreign idea in the east. It’s a universal human experience.

In the same way shame actually plays a very important part in our lives here in the west. It too is a universal human experience. And it’s a massively important concept in the thought world of the Bible. We do ourselves and the people we care for a disservice if we ignore the significant place of shame in our lives.

The ideas outlined below are collected from the sources above, as well as training resources from Ed Welch and Judy Dabler.

Here's a quick diagnostic chart on the difference between guilt and shame from a biblical perspective:

<i>HOW IT FEELS</i>	GUILT = "I DID wrong"	SHAME = "I AM wrong"
<i>HOW IT'S FIXED</i>	GUILT is fixed by forgiveness	SHAME is fixed by acceptance
<i>WHICH DOCTRINE?</i>	Justification	Adoption

Understanding and identifying shame can be hard. In his book *The Soul of Shame* Thompson talks about "an undercurrent of sensed emotion ... that, should we put words to it, would declare some version of I am not enough; There is something wrong with me; I am bad; or I don't matter." It's not necessarily about facts, but about a sense that "there's something wrong with me". To use Thompson's language again, shame "exudes the aroma of being unable or powerless to change one's condition or circumstances."



While the Bible often speaks in legal terms, its flavour is shame and honour. Shame/honour language appears ten times more often than guilt/justification language (according to Ed Welch). Some of the images Scripture uses to depict shame are:

- Naked – I don't want you to see me. If you see me you will loathe me

- Outcast – I don't belong with these people
- Unclean/Defiled/Untouchable – I'm disgusting on the inside and I will make others disgusting if they get too close to me
- Poverty – I have nothing to offer
- Weakness – I have no ability to do anything

The Bible is also full of contrasting images which overturn a person's shame, such as; clothing, welcome, touch, cleansing, riches, crowns, strength, honour, meals together, a head lifted up, a face turned toward someone, and holiness (in the sense of belonging to God and being uniquely his). Ed Welch's book traces these themes through the Bible.

Thompson points out that it is also important to realise that shame is the emotional weapon used by the evil one to corrupt our relationships with God and each other, and disintegrate any and all gifts of vocational vision and creativity. Shame and guilt is real. Shame and guilt can be used by the evil one. God has done something real to remove all our guilt and shame. In the gospel of Jesus – which is all about how the most honoured one in the universe deliberately stepped into shame and dishonour – God has not only elevated the status of those who bear shame in this world, he has also “disarmed the powers and authorities” and “made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” The gospel gives us a new, better, and more fully true story to tell ourselves about who we are and where we fit into things.

'But shame does not get the final word in the story Jesus is telling— the one he invites us to participate in as co-authors, the one in which God's delight commands our attention far more than does our shame. Moreover, I want to encourage you, despite your fear, to enter into this life of telling a different story than the one shame wants you to believe. I do so because I know from my own experience that it is worth it. Despite how hard the work can sometimes feel, it is worth it. It's worth it to know the liberation of retelling my story so very differently from the way shame would have it be told. I do not want to be alone on this journey, and so I ask you to join me. I look forward to how, together, God will enable us to retell our stories as part of the great Story he longs for all of us to join.' (p187)

CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE

This term, as we share our stories and discuss how Jesus deals with our shame, it may be the case that deep and tender matters are exposed.

We hope to be a church where we can help each other face the tough things in our lives and, with gentleness and kindness, little by little, deal with them.

The thing is, that as we face up and deal with issues, we're not alone.

- Jesus loves us and is with us every step of the way;
- The Holy Spirit dwells in us and we hold God's word in our hands, giving us the strength & guidance to do the right thing;

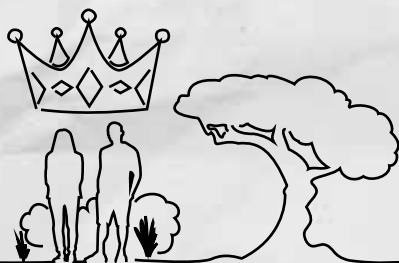
- Our church family cares for us, specifically through:-
 - o Our Growth Group – people we spend time with, sharing & learning together;
 - o Our Growth Group Leader – someone who cares for us in our struggles and who can help us find the right combination of help for us;
 - o Our Growth Group Coaches – who care for and support our Growth Group Leaders as they care for us.

As we sit and listen and care for people, resources have been developed that will help us do that well. These resources can be found on the Creek Road website:-

- creekroad.org.au/introduction-c-u-r-e
- creekroad.org.au/what-is-connecting
- creekroad.org.au/why-is-understanding-important
- creekroad.org.au/respond-engage-evaluate
- creekroad.org.au/using-the-circle-to-understand
- creekroad.org.au/using-triangle-foundation-connecting
- creekroad.org.au/the-square-the-cross
- creekroad.org.au/using-pyramid-see-life

Sample

GOD'S
PEOPLE
IN GOD'S
PLACE



Sample



In the beginning of the true story about God, the world, and us, God made everything. All of it. Absolutely everything was made by the one true God.

When God made everything, he made it from nothing. A blank canvas. The Creator delights in bringing his creation into being.

When God made everything, he made it by speaking. He spoke everything into being. The Creator speaks ideas into reality. What he says is exactly what happens.

Darkness and light. Water and sky. Sea and land. Plants of every kind. Sun and moon. Clouds and stars. Birds and fish. Animals of every kind. God made it all. And as he makes it, he calls it all 'good.' Blessed.

Then, from mud, God made his masterpiece. This part of creation he doesn't just call good. This special part of creation he calls very good. Humankind. Us. Made in God's image. Male and female. No shame. Utterly blessed. Completely loved. The God of all the universe delights in us.

Out of all creation, God gave us this special place. God's image-bearers. God's children. God's representatives. Made to show his loving rule on the earth. Made to live with God as our King. To listen when he speaks. To love as he loves. To name as he names. To be fruitful and multiply. To joyfully spread his blessing across the earth. Peace and rest.

God's people in God's place under God's rule.

BIG IDEA

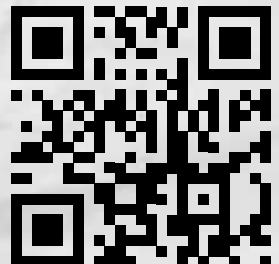
God made the world and rules over the world as the loving King. He created a good and blessed place for his people to delight in together.

KEY PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-28

WATCH THE VIDEO

vimeo.com/207545215



What did you find interesting from the bible talk/Grow Daily?

THE TRUE STORY OF GOD, THE WORLD, AND US

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3

1. Notice the following pattern as the story of this world begins:

- And God said: Let there be...
- God called...
- And it was so...
- And God saw that it was good.
- And there was evening and there was morning the first/second/... day.

...what do you think this pattern tells us about the true story of God and the world?

2. Notice also the following pattern:

- Day 1 Light & Darkness
- Day 2 Water & Sky
- Day 3 Land & Vegetation
- Day 4 Stars, Sun (light) & moon (darkness)
- Day 5 Fish (water) & Birds (sky)
- Day 6 Animals & Man

...what do you think this pattern tells us about the true story of God and the world?

3. Notice the way the story of humankind's beginning is told – especially God's "very good" declaration in Genesis 1:31. What does this tell us about the true story of God, the world, and us?

Read Genesis 2:4-25

4. What more do we learn here about the true story of God, the world, and us?
5. Imagine what it was like to be present in the Garden of Eden at this part of the story. Think of a time when you have felt something of the joy and delight that must have been present in the garden at this time. Share and discuss.
6. Genesis 1-2 shows God's people living in God's place with God as their King. Could there be anything better than life as pictured here?

JESUS' STORY, OUR STORY

7. Genesis 1-2 is filled with the joy of a loving God. It is filled with the joy of people living in loving community, vulnerable and unashamed. Is this our experience today?
8. How do you feel when you read Genesis 2:25? When you feel vulnerable do you also feel shame?



9. Already, even before The Fall in Genesis 3, the word 'shame' anticipates our need for Jesus' story to change our story. Read Matthew 3:13-17. How might Jesus' baptism relate to the themes of joy and shame in the true story about God, the world, and us? How do people use shame to manipulate others in our world?

RETELLING YOUR STORY

'As humans develop, we begin to do what to our knowledge no other animal does: we tell stories.' ('The Soul of Shame' Curt Thompson, p81)

Thompson goes on to describe how we all tell ourselves our story at a number of levels – from the big picture of what life is all about, through to personal experience of others in our lives, to the day to day moments of seemingly trivial details and decisions. Our story begins before we are born, with our parents, wider family, cultural context, personalities, circumstances and the external things that happen to us. As we interact with our world, we are constantly telling ourselves stories about what we encounter, whether we are aware of it or not.

10. What is your story? Who are the key people and events in your story so far? What aspects of the story you tell yourself, about yourself, are you aware of today? Write down below whatever aspects of your story you are aware of at present (at any level, from big picture through to the details of your day).



PRAYER

PRAY FOR
YOUR CROSS
CULTURAL
CONNECT
PARTNER

Sample



BIG IDEA

God made the world good and rules as the loving King.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:1-28

YOU WILL NEED

- Clay/playdough; or
- Google images of beautiful creation

ALL AGES ACTIVITY

Make something beautiful out of clay (e.g. a flower, an animal). Or Google search images of beautiful creation. Can your family make something beautiful together? What is one of your favourite parts of creation?

Keep your playdough creations somewhere for the week (e.g. on the kitchen bench) – or print out your images and keep them on the fridge. You will need them again for next week's family growth.

DISCUSSION

God made this world to be good. And God is the King of what is good. God liked what He saw. God saw the world was good. When we look at creation we can see what is good about it – the complexities of life, the way God has made it all work together. It blows our



minds. Can you think of something that blows your mind about creation? (for example, we breathe out carbon dioxide and trees breathe it in and give us back oxygen to breathe– thanks trees! Thanks God!).

When you made your playdough creations or looked at images of creation we are remembering what is good about creation. God's plan from the beginning was to have a good creation, with a loving King.

PRAYER IDEA

Each time you see your playdough creation or image this week pray this prayer:

'Thank you God for giving us a good creation. Thank you that you are a loving King.'

At Creek Road we love Jesus. We want to reach the city and reach the world with the good news about who Jesus is. We'd love to help you meet Jesus as we explore the Bible together at our Sunday Services.

We want every person to have a chance to connect with Jesus, to grow to be more like Jesus and to serve Jesus. So we try to make everything we do clear and easy to understand.

If you've got any questions, we'd love to answer them. If there is anything you need, we'd love to help.

You don't need to be good, religious, or have it all together to join us on a Sunday. Jesus is for everyone — people of all stages, ages, and places. So is our church.

Everyone is welcome. Seriously.

SERIES COMPANION TEAM

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Emily Andrews

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Bible in Ten

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