

FROM CAMERUN TO GLORY

THE BIBLE IN TEN SESSIONS

LEADERS NOTES

Before you begin.

Take time to pray about this term. It has potential to be a great term of sharing and digging deeper into our young people's lives.

Warning.

Make sure you are aware of the protocols that are in place so that you can report anything suspicious to your team leader that may involve child safety. Remember that while everything we talk about remains in the group, if you think that something is not right, you will share this with your team leader. It is always good to say that at the start of any study that you think may open up deep issues.

Key Theme.

One of the big themes covered in this series is the idea of shame. Shame is a massive part of this series that starts in the garden and carries through the bible. When it comes to shame, we feel that generally, youth do not always know the shame story in their life or are really able to identify or articulate it. We wanted to use the language of 'false stories' – that being the stories that we believe about our lives that we know are not true – against the language of 'true stories' – that being the stories that the bible says are true about God, the world and us through Jesus.

Example 1 – Relationships.

We sometimes believe that a person can 'complete us' or will be our happy ending. This is a false story that the world tells us.

We know and forget that through the death of Jesus; only knowing him can complete us because his love is perfect.

Example 2 – God is in control.

We sometimes believe that God is in control, but if I can just get good grades, study hard and be good, that I will be able to control my future.

We know and forget that God is truly in control of all things. His plan for us is perfect and his will for us is not faulty but faultless.

These are two examples of false stories that we believe. We want to speak into these false stories and speak true stories so that our youth can start to believe that we are a part of God's story for the world.

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Study layout

As a way to make sure that our studies always cover the key elements of reading the bible and applying it to our lives, we use loosely the head, heart and hands template.

HEAD

On the left hand side of the page, we have the passage to read followed by three sliding scales. These scales aim to help youth think about the current story and how it fits into the bigger story of the bible including the language of blessing and curse. These scales also give room for youth to give a reason why they think the way they think. These may become

tricky if the theology is not quite right but we need to make sure we can either correct this, or get an answer from someone who can.

HEART

The first two questions on the right hand side address our heart and speak into the false stories that we are told. The first question is more general about how 'we' might believe false stories about a certain aspect. The second question is more specific and is aimed to dig deeper into each person's story. These discussions must be met with empathy and compassion as we share our (shame) story with each other. As a leader you will need to model both sharing deeply and applying empathy to these stories that arise.

The third question starts with, 'Through Jesus, our stories change. This is deliberate to point towards how Jesus fulfils God's promise. He is the reason our stories can change. It also uses more positive language to help us start believing the true story that dispels the false one.

HANDS

The final question is an application question to help us act upon what we have looked at. Just because it is only one question, does not mean that it should only be discussed quickly at the end, but still needs approximately a third of the time allocated as a guide. Be creative about encouraging and challenging your small group and holding them accountable.

PRAYER

It would be good each week, to have every group member pray for each other. This will vary each week as we all struggle with different things in our lives, but we must teach the importance of empathy and prayer as a great way to do that.

ONE / GODS PEOPLE IN GODS PLACE

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 VERSE

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

READ GENESIS 1:1-28

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After reading this passage, mark on the scale below which of the two opposites is seen more through the events of the story at this stage. **BLESSING / CURSE**

At the very beginning of the Bible, it is clear that God made a perfect world. We can see that God has blessed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden in which he dwelt amongst them. Here we see a perfect world and God's People in this perfect place.

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On the scale below, mark the emotion you think was being felt in the story by Adam and Eve. **LOVE / SHAME**

There would have been no shame in the garden. Adam and Eve were naked and they knew no shame. They would have felt loved by God because they were in a perfect place.

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Based on the events from the story, mark on the scale below how clear is God's promise to his people. **CLEAR / UNCLEAR**

Here we see that God has a perfect plan for his perfect world. The promise for God to save the world is not needed at this stage but we can see that God loves his people and wants the best for them.

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The beginning of Bible shows the true character of God. What are some of the false stories that we hear or believe about the character of God from the world around us?

We hear false stories about God's character everyday – How can God be loving with all the war in the world, How can God caring when babies die from famine. Whether we like it or not these stories can shape our view of God but they are false and don't portray God's true character. This question is to be answered generally.

What aspects of God's character do you sometimes believe are false?

This is where we dig deeper. Ask your group personally or get them to write it down. Think about all the characteristics of God and pinpoint one that you may have struggled with.

For example – God's love is limitless – I used to believe that I had done too much stuff for him to love me.

Through Jesus, our stories change. Through Jesus, we see the true character of God. What are the true stories about God and his character that you need to believe?

Use the answer from the last question for this question. If we use the example of God's love is limitless, how does believing that change my story. For example – I know that because God will always love me, I can be secure in knowing that I will always be loved no matter what because of what Jesus did on the cross for me.

What is one thing you are going to do, to change your belief in the false stories we are told, into the true story of God, the world and us?

Work out just one thing that each person needs to do in order to remind themselves of the true story. It may be as simple as added a small part to the end of each prayer, for example "Help me to always remember that you love me know matter what" to something more like reading or catching up regularly with someone.

Spend time together praying for each other about these false stories we believe and help us to believe the new victorious story we have in Jesus.

It would be good to get every person in the group to pray for each other at the end of this session.