

Many people often talk about a foundational set of narrative Bible passages or Bible stories that can be memorized, engaged with, internalized, and applied by most people. From my perspective, such a set is essential for oral preferenced communicators (and actually all communicators) to establish a strong foundation in their lives directly from scripture. It should facilitate them to know who God is and to provide a foundational knowledge of His redemptive story that will encourage them learn more. This set should share some basic components, but more than likely it will differ significantly in serving people from different worldview perspectives. The set listed at the end of this document serves only as one suggested starter with the aim to help people engage with the whole counsel of God.

There is an overarching principle of which everyone must be conscious: Our goal in communicating with our audience is that we help the listeners to recognize that the God of the Bible is their creator, that He wants to engage with them, and that He deserves that they wholeheartedly honor Him. They also need to understand the broken relationship with their Creator and his offer to restore that relationship. When they are able to recognize that, only then, they can perceive it valuable to turn to the Creator. We communicators need to make sure that we do not motivate people to revere the document itself. The message of the document is what is important. Just because people revere a document, it does not mean that they simply will believe the document because they have it. It even may encourage them to make the document an idol that is only remotely connected to the message it holds.

When people are not familiar with God, it may be very helpful to start with bridging stories, door openers, or redemptive analogies. At the same time, when they have a false understanding about God and the Bible or their opinions have been negatively influenced, there may be a barrier. Then it is important to evaluate if one should initially start with a story that does not confront such issues. Prematurely addressing these issues could make an audience defensive or even

automatically reject everything. If so, one should address such barriers later when people are open to deal with those issues. On the other hand, there may be issues that need to be dealt with before people may be open to God and His Word. Ultimately only God can guide us in making the best choices. Any issues should be addressed only as needed, before starting an overarching story set. So, we always need to consider using stories that can be used as bridges or redemptive analogies before an overview of the Biblical narrative.

Another option is to start with a story set that is drawing out Scriptural truths from passages to give a basic overview of the Biblical meta narrative. It serves as an overview that reflects a basic skeleton set for people to engage with, requiring minimal background information. It contains about 15 stories that are completely from Scripture, but they are extracted from the passages involved and include only essential key concepts. They aim to address the foundational issues for people to start to connect to the broader Scriptural narrative. They should not focus on any academic theological perspective, because this set is a foundation. This can be a great help for many people groups who have not been exposed to Scriptural truth.

Regardless which way we start, if we begin with too many detail stories, it will become too much new material to process properly and to remember. The ultimate aim is to help people engage with God through the redemptive story of God. In that context, we should not rapidly add many new concepts and ideas, but we should consider repeating newly learned concepts, since repetition of any Biblical principles serves to help people strengthen their faith. Further passages will then serve to help them grow over time. In this way they can experience an unfolding of the beauty and richness of the whole counsel of God.

That unfolding of their understanding of God is like a seed of a tree. Initially we don't know anything about the tree, flowers, and fruit that are in a sense 'hidden' in that seed. The seed first needs to sprout, next it grows to be a small plant, that over time becomes a large tree. At one point it will start blooming. Only after that it will grow fruit... and inside that fruit there is another seed. This completes the picture and

as such it represents a learning process like the process of us humans learning about God.

We need to make sure that people understand that the meta-narrative (overarching story) is not about us meeting God's standard, but about having our relationship with God restored. Our life choices have consequences and choosing our way above God's way (in essence our sinful actions) causes our relationship with God to be ruined and it is not possible for us personally to restore that relationship. We need to realize that only God can restore our relationship with Him by giving us a second birth, which changes us. We need to come to the place that we recognize and accept that we cannot handle 'the understanding of knowing good and evil'. We only can become reflectors of God's love in our lives through rebirth. Therefore, it is crucial that we clearly communicate this foundational message from God's Word. It is essential to consider this always in communicating the overarching story.

Overarching story sets need to include that:

1. The history of mankind started with God giving them life and their life was good (just as God wanted it to be)
2. God warned mankind, but they didn't heed God's warning. Instead, they embraced the choice of knowing good and evil, resulting in its consequences (broken relationship, death, and other things).
3. God provided the only way for restoration of the relationship.
4. God provided a future return to it being good (just as God wanted it to be) where the issue of the choice of knowing good and evil has been dealt with.

I believe that there are no absolute story sets. The following is only a sample set to provide a selection to choose from. Especially the third section has a wide array of possible stories, so I recommend that you don't limit the choice to my ideas, but discover which stories may connect with the worldview of the people you are serving. The stories should be able to stand on their own with minimal introduction. Such stories should not need immediate linking to stories that have not yet been chosen. As needed, help people select initial stories that:

- connect with their worldview perspective
- are not too long and easy to remember
- in terms of content, should not have complex storylines
- need little or no additional theological, historical, and cultural background (of the story setting), except for what has already been introduced
- are in a logical sequencing (building on each other) and in many contexts, chronological sequencing is one relevant way of sequencing

The history of mankind started with God giving them life and their life was good (just as God wanted it to be)

Genesis 1:1 to 2:3

God warned mankind, but they didn't heed God's warning. Instead, they embraced the choice of knowing good and evil, resulting in its consequences (broken relationship, death, and other things)

Genesis 2:4-25

Genesis 3:1-24

Sometimes people prefer to stop earlier in chapter 3, but it is important that we don't change the focus, like for example, we want to make sure that the responsibility of the choice man made is not put on the serpent or on God or that it left is left unclear. It is good to consider whether this story should be told in two parts: the first part through verse 13 and then sharing the story of the consequences from verse 14 onwards.

God provided the only way for restoration of the relationship

This includes:

- stories that show different aspects of God's character in context of His continually giving people a chance to accept being restored in their relationship with Him. This happens through God providing

forgiveness (paying for their wrong doing, restoring their honor, giving them a second birth);

- stories that show people as individuals and groups when they continue to desire and pursue their own ways despite God's love for them and they consequently have to deal the results;
- stories that show people who recognize their Creator and accept by faith what He offers in love and that He only can restore their relationship with Him.

This comes together in God's provision of His coming to earth as Jesus, a human being, physically dying for the sins of all people, and subsequently coming back to life, thus overcoming death. This gives people the opportunity to accept by faith that a second birth is essential in restoring their relationship with God. Even though these stories include promises that God made, God's overarching story is not about the promises, but about our Creator and our relationship with Him.

Unless issues in the stories we are using are addressed sufficiently for people to engage with it in proper context, it is better to leave specific themes for successive story cycles. Initially focus only on the meta-narrative with a natural cultural relevant progression that fits the worldview of those we are serving. This implies that we should initially avoid issues like covenants, law, dispensations, kingship, triune God, Satan's role, baptism, as well as day, place, and role of the Sabbath and other feasts or holidays.

Genesis 4:1-16

Genesis 11:1-9

A Psalm should be considered in light that not everything in it is a directive from God, but it may express the feelings of the author as he experiences issues from his personal life in relationship to God.

Psalm 1

Psalm 19

Psalm 23

Psalm 36

Psalm 90

Psalm 93

Psalm 96

Psalm 100

Psalm 117

Psalm 127

Psalm 139

Psalm 143

Psalm 145

In some cultures, proverbs are used widely. Sometimes they are used to help people connect and remember truths or principles that have been learned through, for example, stories or life experiences. Sometimes they completely stand on their own or are always used in connection with a certain story.

Selected Proverbs (for example Proverbs 1:1 or starting at verse 20 to 1:33)

Daniel 3 or 6

Jonah (pretty long but can be divided)

Isaiah 46:5-13a

Nahum 1:1-15a

Coming up to the Gospels one possible choice is to make a selection out of one Gospel that best fits the needs

Use one of the chronologies if needed to establish the authenticity of the people and/or the selected stories

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 20:1-16

Luke 8:4-15

Luke 10:25-37

Luke 15:11-32

Luke 17:11-19

Luke 18:9-14

Acts 17:16-31

Romans 1:16-32

1 Corinthians 13

Philippians 2:5-11

God provided a future return to it being good (just as God wanted it to be) where the issue of the choice of knowing good and evil has been dealt with

Revelation 21:1-7

Revelation 22:1-7(if the second death has been addressed properly)