



The Story of EVERYTHING

Big Idea Discussion Guide / Session 3 - Jesus

Big Idea

Experiencing the fullness of Jesus in the incarnation, atonement, and restoration is the centerpiece of *The Story of Everything*. In Jesus, God is bringing everything back together.

Ice Breaker

Who is your favorite fictional hero? What is it about him/her that makes him/her so special?

Introduction

We need to understand the whole truth to fully appreciate who Jesus really is and His role in *The Story of Everything*. Misconceptions about the story of Jesus can lead to major problems for some people.

1. Before this study, what were the first words and / or thoughts that came to mind when you heard the name "Jesus?"

Incarnation, Atonement, and Restoration

There are three important aspects to understanding the full story of Jesus:

The first aspect is known as The Incarnation. This is when God's son became one of us, coming to earth in human form as Jesus. He hurt with us and for us, and lived life in the way we were all meant to live.

The second aspect to understanding the full story of Jesus is atonement. Jesus secures our salvation by his death on the cross, not by our good works, so that our relationship with God the father can be made whole again just as it was in the beginning.

The third aspect is restoration. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. We believe He will return, completing the renewal of the entire creation, including the resurrection of our bodies. At this time all things will be made new and set to rights. Heaven will come down to earth. The story that started with a perfect creation will end with heaven and earth becoming one again. When

we really get the whole story of Jesus, we can stop doubting that God truly loves us. We can know that He will never give up on us.

When we miss part of *The Story of Everything*, we may believe that Jesus, the Son of God, only showed up on the scene as a fortunate solution to the problem of sin. However, we need to remember that Jesus has always been a part of the perfect community that is God. As part of that community, He has loved us from all eternity. God is the central character of *The Story of Everything*, which culminates in Jesus being sent into our world.

Read Philippians 2:6-11

Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. In *The Story of Everything*, in which we are all characters in the plot, how do you feel about the idea of "God being the central character in the story that culminates in Jesus being sent into our world?"
3. Jesus was sent into the world and took on the nature of a servant, appearing in human form, becoming obedient to death. This is the idea of the incarnation: literally taking on flesh. What are some other ways you could describe the idea of incarnation? What does it look like when people are the incarnation of Jesus to others?

Atonement literally means “to make right again” or “to make up for.” When Jesus died, He made up for, or took care of, the rift between God and us that exists because of sin.

However, if we think that Jesus’ only role in the story is to fix the problem that exists because “we are such bad people who have made God angry,” then we may see God as unstable; the Father hates us while Jesus loves us. We can start to think that we are lucky that Jesus is such a nice guy, while his father is always angry. Paul wrote,

“All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah (Jesus), giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We’re Christ’s representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God’s work of making things right between them.” - 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, The Message

We believe that Jesus is God’s son, taking our sins on Himself. God loves the world so much that he sent his son into the world because only his son could take the sin of the world away. God loves his creation. It is God’s dream that all creation be restored to reflect his nature, which is one of harmony and love.

Dallas Willard talks about the “gospel of sin management” in his book *The Divine Conspiracy*. When I trust Jesus to arrange my eternal destiny, but don’t think He has much of a role in how I live my life right now, then Willard points out this is not the true gospel. In fact, this way of thinking prevents me from experiencing God as He really is. This type of belief means that I will live my life without any reference to how Jesus lived; instead, I just focus on keeping my sin at “acceptable levels.”

4. It’s one thing to say you respect/admire someone, but it can mean something entirely different to say that you follow them. What is the difference between simply respecting, admiring, and believing in Jesus, and actually following Him?

N.T. Wright wrote in his book *Simply Christian* about Jesus, “Jesus went about Palestine announcing that now, at last, God’s Kingdom was arriving. The message went out as

much by what He did as what He said – the message that ancient prophecies were coming true, that Israel’s story was reaching its destination at last, that God Himself was on the move and was about to rescue His people and put the world to rights.”

Jesus is the One we place all our trust in for the story to be what it was meant to be, and have the end that God intended for us from the beginning. This is not just so that we can have our sins forgiven, so we can find our moral compass, or so that we can have power to successfully live life. It’s all of these and more; Jesus is the One who brings about *The Story of Everything* ending in concert with the way it began, both in our lives and in the whole of creation.

5. If you are trusting Jesus for your eternal destiny, how are you doing with trusting Him for your life on this earth? What difference would trusting Him make in restoring God’s dream for the world.

What’s Next

Jesus is more than just the answer to my sin problem. The true story is that God really wants to have a relationship with me and Jesus came to make that possible. As a Church community we are committed to helping people find their way back to God. This journey doesn’t end when we meet God, but continues on forever. Would you describe your life in that way? Have you made a commitment to trust Jesus not only to “save you,” but also to allow Him to live life with you each day?

As you think more about Jesus and your role in *The Story of Everything*, commit to finding out more about the truth of who Jesus is. Start reading the Gospel of John and ask God to show something new about His Son. Be ready to share your insights with your group next time you meet.

As we follow Jesus, we follow his example of the way he lived. Just as Jesus was sent into the world to redeem and bless it, we are also sent into the world to be a blessing. Are you living in an intentional way that others would describe you as being “sent to be a blessing?” How can you be a blessing in your work place, your neighborhood, or your family? Are their places where God is calling you to go and be a blessing?

Take time this week to thank God for his son.

1. Answers will vary. Are there particular misconceptions that you once had about Jesus? Try not to let this question set people up to feel like they are wrong. It's really meant to be a semi-icebreaker.
2. God being the central character of *The Story of Everything* is an interesting concept to remember, especially in a society that promotes the idea that "I am the center of my story. Support this question with, "Is it easy or difficult to not be the main character in the story?" Also with, "In what ways is Jesus the culmination of *The Story of Everything*"
3. The incarnation has incredible implications for how we go and be among people to embody the gospel. Help people see the significance of what Jesus did in his incarnation as a model for how we are to live out our mission to BLESS the world.
4. Help people see that there is a difference in believing in Jesus and following him. Don't let it become a judgmental and negative conversation though! Keep the conversation focused in a grace-filled and inspiring way.
5. Since we know that it was Jesus' role to help restore God's dream for the world, we know that the pressure is on him! We get to join in the work, but the world is not ours to save. It is much easier to trust Jesus when we know that this is his world, and he has promised to always be with us, even to the end of the age!

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As you spend time in your workplace or community, what things do you see that are evidence that God is already at work? What is Jesus already doing in people's lives?

Community Christian Church

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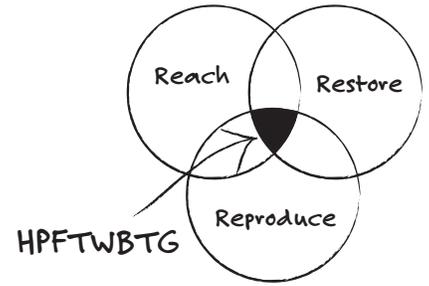
Small Group Mission

Helping People Find Their Way Back to God



Missional Practices: B.L.E.S.S.

- B - Begin with prayer:** We will pray for the people or place to which we are sent.
- L - Listen:** We will listen to the people or place to which we are sent.
- E - Eat:** We will share meals with those to whom we are sent.
- S - Serve:** We will respond to the needs we discover among those to whom we are sent.
- S - Story:** We will share the story of Jesus and what he is doing in our lives with those to whom we are sent.



Type of Small Group On Mission

- One Mission:** The entire small group commits to going after the same mission. This can be a new idea originating from the group, or it can involve plugging into an existing ministry or program in the community.

The place or people our group has been sent to is:

- Multiple Missions:** Each member of the group has a specific mission they are following God in. The group provides a place to celebrate individual stories, wrestle through questions and challenges and provide support and encouragement.

The place or people our group members have been sent to is:

Name: _____ Sent to: _____

Group Dynamics

- Confidentiality: Everything shared in group stays in the group.
- Participation: Everyone participates in our discussions and our mission.
- Empty Chair: We always keep an "empty chair" as a sign of our openness to new people joining us.

Group Leadership

Coach _____

Leader _____

Apprentice Leader _____

Host _____