**The Story** Have you ever been talking to someone and they ask you something like, “hey, what’s your story?” usually you answer with where you’re from, what you do, what you’re about…things like that…

If they want to go deeper you might talk about some of the challenges and successes in your life…. where your life started, where it is now and where it’s headed…

When it comes to God and our walk with him the question of story is good… I like to say it’s a question of fit… when you consider your life, your story, and God… I like to ask…

 Does God fit into your story?

 Or Do you fit into His?

Is God a chapter in the book of your life… or maybe you cast him as a supporting character… or maybe just a passing footnote…?

Or are you a chapter in his story… a supporting character, a main character?… or have you relegated yourself to the footnotes?

Does God fit into your story or Do you fit into his?

God’s big Story has been talked about in a lot of different ways… but one way to do it is to look at 4 big pieces…

 Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration. Let me say those again…

 Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration.

His story and your place in it… is a foundation that you can build your life on!

Creation: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth… (Genesis 1:1)

In Genesis Chapter 1 we see the beginnings of life as we know it…

On day 1, Light. Day Two – separation of water. Day Three – the first appearance of dry ground. day 4, Sky, sun moon and stars are visible. Day 5 – a great number of birds and sea creatures appear. Day 6 man, woman, and land animals appear.

The beginnings of humanity… Our story starts with God and his creation of us…

Genesis 1:***26*** *… God said,* ***"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."***

***27 So God created man in his own image,
       in the image of God he created him;
       male and female he created them.***

***28*** *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it….*

Then it says

***31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good….***

All of Creation is good… but we have a special place, we were created in God’s image… think about that for a second… believers have wondered about the implications of that fact for centuries… there is something holy, something set apart about humanity. We were created in the image of God… An aspect of that reality is that God is Trinity… one God, 3 persons. God is communal by nature – we were created in that image, we were created for relationships … with God… with each other… with the rest of creation… When we confess that God is creator and that we are made in his image, there is something powerful about that for how we think about our story… and God’s big story…

King David… sang about God’s creative work in psalm 139…

*Psalm 139:* ***13****For you created my inmost being;
    you knit me together in my mother’s womb.*

***14****I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

When you hold a newborn child… you realize the truth of these words… when you contemplate the complexity of one strand of DNA… you are in awe at the sophistication of humanity… we get all excited about the latest technological gadget but the most advanced technology ever created was you and me… humanity… nothing we’ve “created” can compare…

King David wrote and sang to God about this…

*Psalm 139* ***16****Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

All life is Holy! WE are made in God’s image. When I look at my children I truly see how awesome God’s creation is…

And we see this in other parts of creation too, right?… in fact so many aspects of creation reveal that there is a creator… not only human life, but the heavens and the earth… and most people admit this….

In fact just the other day I was talking to the shuttle driver giving me a ride home from the car shop… and even though he said he wasn’t religious, he did say… there has to be a God… just look at this place…

…when we see the Grand Canyon or Victoria Falls or the Matterhorn or the volcano Paricutin or the northern lights or the great barrier reef… we see the fingerprints of God… St. Paul wrote about it this way…

*For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.* Romans 1:20

Have you ever looked at any part of Creation and “clearly seen” God? Holding a newborn child, watching a sunset, beholding the great natural wonders of the world?

But that’s not the complete story, is it? You see, on the one hand while the creation reveals the Creator, and the Word of God points us to who that Creator is… and we see that he is a provider, creative, everywhere, intelligent, all powerful and more… this is not the complete story right?

Because when we look at the world we also see things that disturb us… We look at this world and we see that not everything is right… {twin towers]… something is wrong…

Something is broken [images of starving children]… suffering exists…

The creation cries out [images-natural disasters]… tsunamis, tornados, hurricanes, natural disasters

And it’s not just out there in the news but it’s in here… in our hearts, in our lives, in our families, … something is wrong… something is broken… it’s called SIN. And we inherited from the first human beings… Adam and Eve… you see God had placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to live in perfect relationship with God, with each other and with the creation… but he gave them a boundary, to protect them…

***16****…the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;****17****but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” Genesis 2:16-17 NIV*

But Adam and Eve… thought they knew better and were deceived by Satan. They ate the fruit. They were trying to fit God into their story and rejected their part in God’s Story…

And so St. Paul describes it this way…

***12****When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.* Rom 5:12 NLT

God banished them from the Garden (gen 3:23)… we call this The Fall of humanity… and we inherited a brokenness… as King David said “I was born a sinner.” (Psalm 51:5)… and so King David eventually died. Like every human being since Adam and Eve…

 St. Paul said it simply…

**23**For the wages of sin is death…. Romans 6:23a

God Created, Man Fell…Creation, Fall… but the story doesn’t end there… God promised to one day redeem it all…Creation. Fall. Redemption. this redemption of life was promised all the way back in Genesis 3:15… pointing forward to Jesus and his victory over Satan…eventually God chose and called Abraham to bless all peoples… From Abraham came Israel, the people of God, they, however, failed and floundered in the mission entrusted to their care…

and if the story ended there… that would be pretty depressing… but it doesn’t…

Though Israel failed, God’s promise remained… and finally the messiah, the Christ, Jesus was Born [picture]

… He is Israel reduced to one man… and He brought redemption not just to Israel but to all nations…

Jesus Healed – and challenged religious legalism. [image]

Jesus fed the 5000 [image] and did countless other miracles…. And when hid them he demonstrated his control over all creation

He crossed societal boundaries to bring truth and mercy to all… [image of woman at well]

The Woman at the well was an outcast and a Samaritan… Jesus spoke to her because God’s promise and grace are for all people…

He led the biggest unity movement in the history of the world…crossing religious, social and economic boundaries to invite all nations back to God…

All of Israel was expecting a political leader…freedom from Rome… but the true enemy was Satan, not Rome, and the central element of freedom is the forgiveness of sins, not political independence… Jesus brought more than anyone expected … he brought redemption and freedom and victory from the battle that began in the garden at Creation…

Jesus lived a perfect life and died in our place [image of Jesus on cross], He knows suffering, He knows death

He knows our sin because he took it upon himself… but the story doesn’t stop there…

[image of Jesus walking out of grave] He rose…to life… He paid the way and paved the way for us to eternal life… He rose and so will we…

***23****For the wages of sin is death,****but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord****.* Romans 6:23niv

***16****For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.****17****For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.* John 3:16-17 NIV

But the Story doesn’t end there…

Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration!

In the Gospels, When Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead and stilled the storms, he was restoring order and harmony to human bodies and natural systems that had become disordered. In Jesus’ ministry we get a glimpse of what is yet to come… Jesus began the work of restoration but it isn’t complete yet… When Jesus comes again the restoration work will be completed.

St. Peter wrote…

*“…we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:13b*

What will it be like when Jesus comes again… to restore all things? The earth and the heavens will be new, restored… and we will have new bodies… just like Jesus rose with a new body so too will we… St. Paul talks all about that in 1 Corinthians 15

And St. John was given a vision of this future restoration…

***4****….There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”* Rev 21:4

No death, no mourning, no crying, no pain… new, perfect bodies… the heavens and the earth restored!

This beautiful sanctuary that we’re in was just recently restored… it was a huge restoration project… but it is nothing compared to the final restoration of all creation… and I don’t know about you but I can’t wait for that day… when all will be made right! Relationships restored, with God, with each other, with all of creation!

That’s God’s Big Story – Past. Present. And future. Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration!

So what’s your story? I know that when I try to write my own story and use God for my purposes… my life is challenging and frustrated. When I put my identity in God’s Story and view my life as part of His story and his work in history… then my life is purposeful, focused and part of something far greater than I could ever come up with on my own.

In fact I think that you can only truly find your story in His! He created you and has redeemed you and He will one day restore every aspect of your life perfectly and completely. Until then… he wants you to help him fill the earth and subdue it with redemption and restoration… challenge religious legalism and cross racial, cultural, social and economic boundaries… to be part of the biggest unity movement in the history of the world… the Kingdom of God, the Body of Christ!

His story and your place in it… is a foundation to build your life on!