

UNFOLDED

THE STORY OF GOD

ERIC GEIGER

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CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	4
INTRODUCTION	5
HOW TO USE.....	6
STORY OF GOD TIMELINE.....	8
CREATION & FALL	10
PROMISE & A PEOPLE.....	26
RESCUE & THE LAW	42
LAND & KINGDOM.....	56
EXILE & RETURN	72
JESUS	86
A NEW PEOPLE.....	102
A BETTER BEGINNING	118
APPENDICES.....	122



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Geiger serves as one of the vice presidents at LifeWay Christian Resources, leading the Resources Division. Eric received his doctorate in leadership and church ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Eric wrote or co-wrote several books including *Creature of the Word* and the best-selling church leadership book, *Simple Church*. He also serves as the senior pastor of ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tennessee.

Eric is married to Kaye, and they have two daughters, Eden and Evie. During his free time, Eric enjoys dating his wife, playing with his daughters, and shooting basketball.

INTRODUCTION

Men,

Thanks for picking up this study.

A.W. Tozer famously said, “Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian.”¹ While we will not go through every verse in the Bible in this study (it would be much longer than eight weeks), we will walk through the whole story of the Bible.

There is not a greater story. No other story has a hero like the Hero in this Story. No other story has a greater rescue than the rescue we find in this Story. No other story ends like this Story ends.

Sure, the world offers us other stories and other pursuits, but they all pale in comparison to this one. To Christ’s Story. And whenever we chase those pursuits, we are chasing something less.

As you understand the whole Bible story, I believe the Lord will do a great work in your heart. I believe this because He did a great work in mine as I prepared and studied. I walked away from the time with a greater understanding of who He is and where I fit in the Story He has been telling.

All the stories in my life, and all the stories in the Bible, make much more sense when I keep the Story of the Bible in view. So, I hope you throw yourself into this study, into the teaching times, into the devotions, and into the discussions with your group.

I am honored to be alongside you in this journey!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Geis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

¹A.W. Tozer, *Of God and Men: Cultivating the Divine/Human Relationship*.(Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1960) 77.

HOW TO USE

Welcome to *Unfolded: The Story of God*. This study is designed to be used in a small group setting with weekly group meetings. However, it could also be used by an individual, in one-on-one mentoring, or adapted for an extended men's retreat.

BIBLE STUDY BOOK

Listed below are the different elements in the Bible study book.

WATCH

Use this page to take notes during the video teaching portion of the group meeting. The outlines for each teaching session are included.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Questions are provided to help foster discussion of the video.

NOTES PAGE

This grid page is provided to take notes during the discussion time.

PERSONAL STUDY

Four days of personal Bible study will help reinforce the video teaching, and provide an opportunity to study passages or themes not covered in the video.

SESSION OUTLINE

Design your group sessions to fit the space, time, and needs of your men. However, below is a sample group session outline that you can adapt.

1. OPENING.

Review the material in the previous week's personal Bible study.

2. WATCH VIDEO.

Play the session video and take notes during the video teaching.

3. DISCUSS THE VIDEO.

Questions are provided to help foster discussion among the group.

4. CLOSING.

Close the session with prayer.

LEADER TIPS

Listed below are some tips to make this an effective and meaningful study for you and the men you lead.

PRAY DILIGENTLY.

Ask God to prepare you to lead this study. Pray individually and specifically for the men in your group. Make this a priority in your personal walk and preparation.

PREPARE ADEQUATELY.

Don't just wing this. Take time to preview each video session so you have a good grasp of the content. Look over the group discussion questions and consider your group of men. Feel free to delete or reword the questions provided, and add other questions that fit your group.

PROVIDE RESOURCES.

Each man will need a Bible study book. Try to have extras on hand for men who join the group later in the study.

ENCOURAGE FREELY.

Champion the men doing this study, encouraging them to participate in every part of the study.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

Make sure you complete all the personal Bible studies. Be willing to share your story, what you're learning, and your questions as you discuss together.

BE AWARE.

If men are hesitant to discuss their thoughts and questions in a larger group, consider dividing into smaller groups to provide a setting more conducive to conversation.

FOLLOW UP.

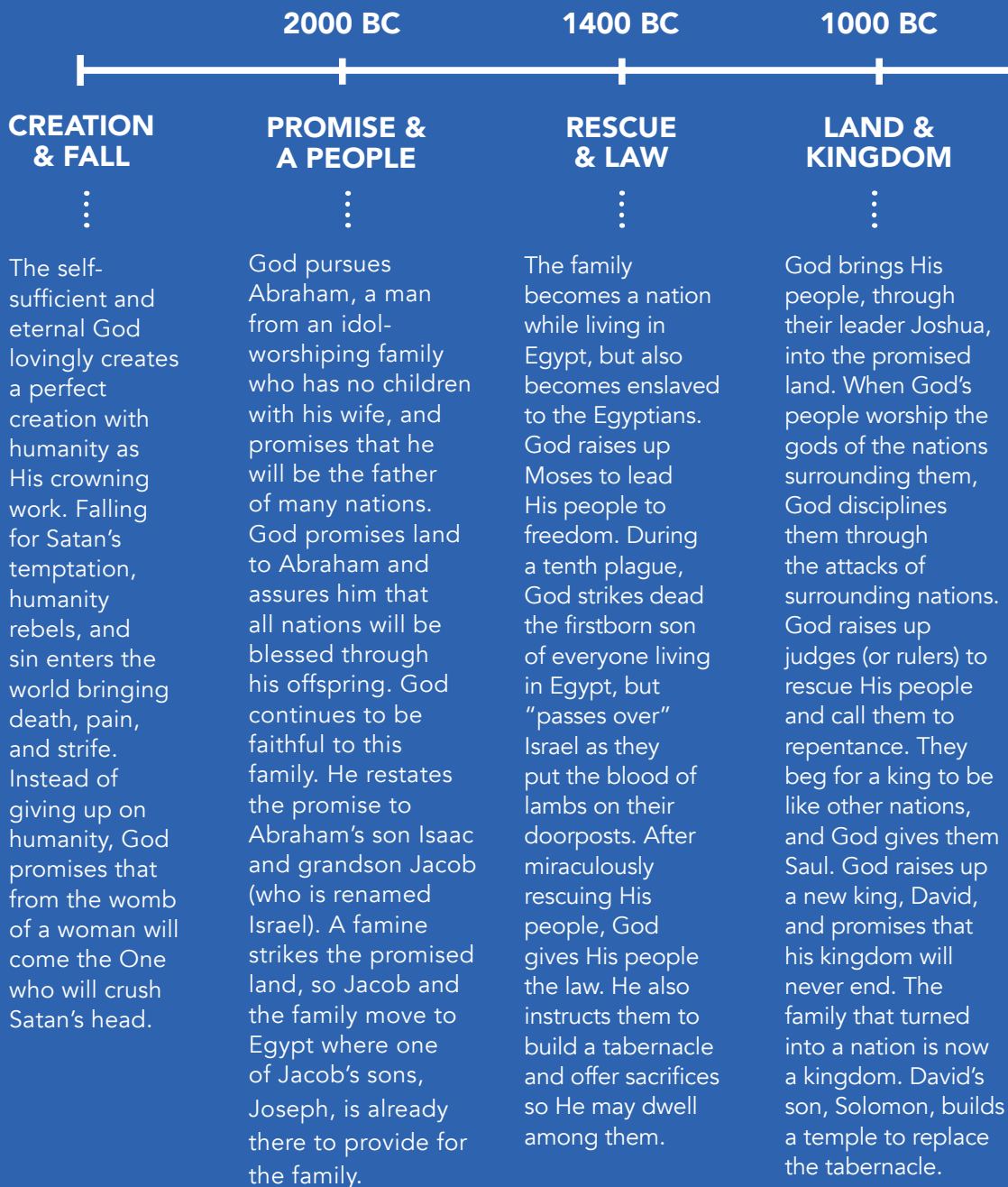
If a participant mentions a prayer request or need, make sure to follow up. It may be a situation where you can get other men involved in helping out a brother.

EVALUATE OFTEN.

After each session and throughout the study, assess what needs to be changed to more effectively lead the study.

NOTE: Free resources to promote the study are provided at www.lifeway.com/unfolded.

THE STORY OF GOD TIMELINE



600 BC

**EXILE &
RETURN**



Solomon takes foreign wives and allows their foreign gods to clutter the land. His son continues the line of rulers and the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Prophets confront the people but they persist in their idolatry. The Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom is carried away into Babylonian captivity. When they are freed, they return to a nation and kingdom far less glorious than before and are still unable to keep their promises.

AD

JESUS



A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

AD 30

**A NEW
PEOPLE**



After His ascension to heaven, Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit and His disciples turn the world upside down preaching the good news of Jesus. In the midst of intense persecution, the gospel spreads, and Gentiles and Jews form a new people. Churches are planted in cities, and apostles write letters encouraging and instructing the people in the grace of Christ and their response to His grace.

**A BETTER
BEGINNING**



A time is coming where God's people—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who have been rescued by Christ—will enjoy Him and His rule forever in perfect harmony. Satan will be crushed, the effects of sin will be reversed, and all things will be made new.

SEASON 1:

CREATION & FALL



WATCH

FIVE STATEMENTS ABOUT GOD:

1. He is.
2. He is the Creator.
3. He is self-sufficient.
4. He is gracious and loving.
5. He is powerful and wise.

THREE THINGS WE LEARN ABOUT US:

1. We were created to reflect His image.

“You have never met a mere mortal.” — C.S. Lewis¹

2. We were created to rule.
3. We were created to relate to others.

TWO THOUGHTS ABOUT HOW WE MESSED UP:

1. Instead of reflecting His image, we rebelled.

“The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God.” — John Stott²

2. Instead of us ruling over creation, creation ruled over us.

Protoevangelion: the first time the gospel is announced.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Which of the five statements about God is most difficult for you to understand?
Which is the most encouraging?

Why is it so important for us to understand we are made in God's image?

How is this idea of being made in God's image being distorted today?

How does Satan tempt us in a similar way that he did Eve?

What are some ways that you choose rebellion over reflecting God's image?

How do we still allow creation to rule over us?

Explain the glimmer of hope found at the end of Genesis 3.

What was the first sin followed by? Why is this so significant?

How did God show grace to Adam and Eve?

In what ways has God shown grace to you?

SEASON 1

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

In our first group session, we discussed how God introduced Himself by revealing that He is the One who created everything—including us. However, instead of being grateful for His gift of creation, we, humanity, rebelled against the rule of God, as seen in Genesis 3. Our next group session will begin in Genesis 12, as we focus on God’s pursuit of a people for Himself, through a man named Abram. The personal studies this week focus on events that happen in God’s story between the fall of humanity and the call of Abram.

DAY 1

BROKENNESS & BLESSED EXCHANGE

GENESIS 3:9-18

In the beginning of God's story, we saw Him lovingly create humanity. We were the crowning work of His creation, and everything was perfect. The second chapter in Genesis ends with a statement of peace:

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

[GENESIS 2:24-25](#)

No shame. Can you imagine life with no shame?

No guilt from your past mistakes. No regrets over choices you made or did not make but wish you had. No grief over words you said or did not say. Absolutely no shame.

Of course, all that changed in the very next chapter of Genesis when humanity rejected God's rule. Sin entered the world and shame came along with it. Peace was broken. The entrance of sin into the world was not a minor adjustment to God's creation. It affected everything.

[Read Genesis 3:8-19 to see the aftermath.](#)

PEACE WITH GOD WAS BROKEN.

They hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
GENESIS 3:8

Adam and Eve realized they were naked and hid from the Lord among the trees. Instead of running to God, they ran from him. The “no shame” in Genesis 2 was traded for shame, guilt, and remorse.

PEACE WITH EACH OTHER WAS BROKEN.

Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.
GENESIS 3:16

Instead of caring for his wife, Adam turned on her. Like a little kid who points the finger at his sibling, Adam defended himself before God by blaming Eve. Men, clearly this is not the type of leaders we should be—shirking responsibility, shifting blame, and passively watching the Enemy tempt our wives.

As a consequence of her sin, God told Eve that there would be relational tension between her and her husband. If you’re married, you have experienced this. But husbands and wives aren’t the only ones to feel the strain. Office politics, broken friendships, and business relationships gone south are all examples of broken peace.

PEACE WITHIN OURSELVES WAS BROKEN.

You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life.
GENESIS 3:17

God told Adam that work would now be filled with painful labor. As a man, you know that your job—even if it is an awesome one—will not ultimately satisfy you. Work does not quench because our souls can only be quenched by God.

PEACE WITH OUR WORLD WAS BROKEN.

The ground is cursed because of you ...
GENESIS 3:17

Because of the fall, all of creation bears the weight of corruption. Sin has ravaged our world, and you daily face the ramifications. Cancer, disease, natural disasters, unfruitful harvests, and death are all the results of living in a broken world.

Is there any solution for our brokenness? For the shame we now face?

How have you personally experienced the brokenness from the fall? Explain.

Thankfully we can read about the shame of Genesis 3 with our eyes fixed on Jesus. When the apostle Paul wrote about marriage several thousand years later—he referenced Genesis 2 to show us how Christ loves us. He wrote:

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church.

EPHESIANS 5:31-32

The word *mystery* here does not refer to something too deep or complex to understand, but to something that was hidden in the Old Testament that has now been revealed for our understanding and enjoyment. And Paul made the mystery clear: “I am talking about Christ and the church.” When one becomes a Christian, one is united with Christ.

When Adam and Eve were first united, they felt no shame. When we are united with Christ in faith, there is no shame. Martin Luther called this the Blessed Exchange:

“Faith unites the soul with Christ as a spouse with her husband. Everything which Christ has becomes the property of the believing soul; everything which the soul has becomes the property of the Christ. Christ possesses all blessings and eternal life: they are thenceforward the property of the soul. The soul has all the iniquities and sins: they become thenceforward the property of Christ. It is then a blessed exchange commences.”³

How has Christ turned hopelessness into hope in your life? How have you personally experienced that hope?

DAY 2

MORE STRIFE, BETTER BLOOD

GENESIS 4:1-16

One of the devastating results of sin entering the world is relational strife, evidenced by hatred and even violence toward one another. We have all lived it. We have fought with our parents, our spouses, and our friends. Anger has festered in our hearts and bitterness has robbed us of our joy. Even as young boys, we fought on playgrounds, sucker-punched kids we did not like, and bit each other. We can be ruthless. All this began in the garden of Eden.

If only the sin would have stopped in the garden. But it didn't. It escalated. That's how it always works, apart from God's grace. We see this clearly just one generation after Adam and Eve's devastating choice. Their children evidenced the devastating and natural progression of sin.

[Read Genesis 4:1-16.](#)

Cain was furious because the Lord looked with favor on Abel's offering and not on his. So, despite the Lord's warning about being mastered by sin (v. 7), Cain killed his own brother.

Why did God not receive Cain's offering? What is really going on here? Some verses in the New Testament cast more light on the two brothers.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

HEBREWS 11:4

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another, unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

1 JOHN 3:11-12

God receiving Abel's offering and rejecting Cain's was not based on what they offered with their hands, but on the condition of their hearts. Abel offered in faith. Cain's heart was evil, and he proved his evil by killing his brother.

Is there a problem with our world? Are things really that broken here? Genesis 4 shows us that, indeed, things are not as they were designed to be. The first son born into this world was a murderer.

Then [God] said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground! So now you are cursed, alienated, from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed."

GENESIS 4:10-11

What current events show that things are not as God designed them to be? Explain.

Cain's sinful rage caused him to spill the blood of his brother, and that blood condemned him. By God's grace, we have a rescue from this sin, from this hatred! The New Testament tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks a better word, a different word than the blood of Abel.

... to Jesus (mediator of a new covenant), and to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the blood of Abel.

HEBREWS 12:24

Both Jesus and Abel were innocent and killed by sinful and hateful men. But their spilled blood speaks different messages. The blood of Abel condemned Cain; the blood of Jesus justifies us. The blood of Abel spoke against Cain; the blood of Christ speaks for us. The blood of Abel cries out for Cain's condemnation; the blood of Christ cries out for our forgiveness and justification.

We have been like Cain. We have hated, been angry, acted cruelly, and held bitterness and jealousy in our hearts. Thankfully, Jesus' blood speaks a better word! We are not condemned. As Jesus' blood fell to the ground, our liberation and salvation were secured. We are not sent to wander the land, but are welcomed to Him.

Consider a recent time that your life reflected Cain's response. If you've not repented for this thought or action, take time now to do so. Then, thank God that the blood of Christ has rescued us from condemnation for our sins.

DAY 3

COSMIC REBOOT

GENESIS 6–9

The space allocated in the Bible to the account of Noah (four chapters) indicates it is a significant event in the story God is telling. When you read the first six chapters of Genesis, you may think, *Wow, that escalated quickly*. In Genesis 2, everything is perfect. God had created everything, declared it to be good, and told Adam and Eve to multiply and steward creation. They enjoyed God and each other in perfect harmony. There was no shame, no sin, no pain, and no death.

Then Adam and Eve rebelled, and their cosmic rebellion had an impact on everything. We still feel the effects. Adam represents all of us, for all of us have sinned. The image of God is still in us, but it is distorted.

Following the sin of Cain, who murdered his brother, sin spread rampantly. And already by Genesis 6, God has had enough.

When the LORD saw that man's wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time, the LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Then the LORD said, "I will wipe off from the face of the earth mankind, whom I created, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them." Noah, however, found favor in the sight of the LORD.

GENESIS 6:5-8

Noah was not a perfect man, but God expressed grace to him and his family. Noah did not earn God's favor, but rather God graciously gave it to him. God told Noah to build a massive boat out of wood, an ark, so he and his family could be saved from the floodwaters that would destroy the whole earth. Noah and his family took pairs of animals and birds on the ark with them so that life would continue once the flood was over (Gen. 7:1-10).

The flood was absolutely devastating.

The mountains were covered as the waters surged above them more than 20 feet. Every creature perished—those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind. Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils—everything on dry land died. He wiped out every living thing that was on the surface of the ground, from mankind to livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.

[GENESIS 7:20-23](#)

Sin violates God's holy character and must be punished, yet God is also loving and gracious. So to both punish sin and pardon people, God poured out His wrath through a flood while simultaneously using Noah and an ark to rescue people.

[How do we see Christ in this story?](#)

Centuries later Jesus came to be our pardon. Just as Noah saved his entire family from the just wrath of God, Jesus saved His family—those who believe in Him—from the punishment for sin.

After Noah and his family were saved and left the ark, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to God.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, He said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, even though man's inclination is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done."

[GENESIS 8:20-22](#)

God made a covenant with Noah and promised to never flood the whole earth again. This is the first time we see *covenant* used in God's story. A covenant is an agreement backed with a promise.

“You, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it.” Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, “Understand that I am confirming My covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you—birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you—all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. I confirm My covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by the waters of a flood; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between Me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: I have placed My bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.”

GENESIS 9:7-13

Though hurricanes, tsunamis, and other disastrous effects of a fallen and broken world will still strike our world, the whole earth will never be flooded again. Every time we see a rainbow, we can remember that we have a God who keeps His promises.

As you close today, reread Genesis 9:7 and notice the command God gave Noah. God restated the command “Be fruitful and multiply,” which He first gave to Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 1:28). God flooded the earth because of our sin, but He did not give up on humanity. He gave them a new start and continued to pursue them. Just as He continues to pursue us. Just as He continues to pursue you.

What evidence in your life shows that God has not given up on you?

DAY 4

MORE OF LIVING FOR OURSELVES

GENESIS 11:1-9

Just as God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply over the whole earth, He told Noah to do the same. But instead of multiplying and spreading over the whole earth, humanity chose to cluster together. Chronologically, the story of the tower of Babel fits sometime in the middle of Genesis 10—which gives us an account of the people who filled the earth. Before the people spread out speaking their own languages (Gen. 10:5), the following event took place.

At one time the whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let us make oven-fired bricks." They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Then the LORD came down to look over the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech." So from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name is called Babylon, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

GENESIS 11:1-9

The people in this story wanted community, security, and identity. They wanted community expressed in a city. They wanted security expressed in a tower that would protect them from others. And they wanted identity expressed in a name

for themselves. They wanted good things for the wrong reasons and by the wrong means. Every man wants to have a secure future, people who love him, and a sense of how and why he is on the planet. But these guys wanted this for their own glory, and they were going to earn it themselves.

How have you sought community, security, and identity in the wrong ways? What were the consequences of your actions?

Building ourselves up runs in the same vein as Adam and Eve's sin. It speaks of wanting to be the ones who decide what is good and evil, reflecting our desire to be in charge.

So God divided the people into multiple languages and "scattered them over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:8). Their desire to achieve community, security, and identity apart from God was halted since they could not complete their building project. The people were also pushed outward, spread across the land as God commanded (Gen. 1:28; 9:7).

All this was in God's plan. Today, He doesn't receive worship in just one language, but many languages. And when His story concludes, He will be worshiped by people from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev. 5:9-10).

As we move forward to the next session, Genesis 12 will show us that God was going to bless all the nations through one man—a man willing to leave his community, his security, and his identity. He trusted God for all three instead of foolishly attempting to earn them on his own.

How have you found community, security, and identity in Christ?