

"The Story of God: From Creation to New Creation"
John Mark Hicks
Discussion Guide

Outline

Introduction: The Five Acts in the Story of God

Act 1- Creation

Scene One: God and Creation
Scene Two: Humanity in the Garden
Scene Three: Living East of Eden

Act 2 - Covenant

Scene One: The Creation of Israel
Scene Two: God's Gifts to Israel
Scene Three: Israel's Tumble and Exile

Act 3 - Christ

Scene One: The Son Sent into the World
Scene Two: Ministry of Jesus
Scene Three: The Messiah Comes to the Temple
Scene Four: Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation of Jesus

Act 4 - Church

Scene One: The Spirit Sent into our Hearts
Scene Two: The Formation of Community
Scene Three: A Gifted, Sent Community

Act 5 - Consummation (New Creation)

Scene One: Suffering and Hope
Scene Two: Resurrection: Jesus, Believers, and the Cosmos
Scene Three: The Eternal Home

Scripture Readings and Questions

Resource: John Mark Hicks, *Around the Bible in 80 Days: The Story of God from Creation to New Creation* (Abilene: Leafwood Press, 2022). The "Days" associated with each scene refer to the days in *Around the Bible in 80 Days*.

Introduction: The Five Acts in the Story of God (Day 1)

Bible Text: Romans 16:25-27

Question: How does it change your reading of the Bible to ask what God is doing rather than first asking what are we required to do?

Act 1- Creation

Scene One: God and Creation (Days 2-5)

Bible Texts: John 17:24-26; Isaiah 66:1-2; Genesis 1:1-2, 31

Questions:

In what way does God's love move God to create? How do you understand that?

When we recognize creation as a cathedral of praise, in what ways does this open our eyes to see God in creation and invite our response?

When God finished creating in Genesis 1, in what ways was the creation still incomplete, or what did God intend for the future of the creation?

Scene Two: Humanity in the Garden (Days 6-9)

Bible Texts: Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-17

Questions:

What does it mean to say, "I am created in the image of God," and how does this shape our lives as God's representatives on the earth?

In what ways, in addition to procreation, ought human beings to fill the earth today?

In what ways do you subdue the earth in the present without destroying it?

In what ways might we "rule" or "shepherd" the earth that avoids exploitation but also develops the potential of creation?

Where do we see wisdom and folly in the story of Adam and Eve?

Scene Three: Living East of Eden (Days 10-13)

Bible Texts: Genesis 3:1-7; 4:3-7; 6:11-13; 11:2-4

Questions:

When have you acted prematurely and foolishly rather than waiting for maturation and the clarity that comes from wisdom?

Where do you see grace and mercy in the story of Cain and Abel, and where do you see the degeneration of humanity?

Where do you see grace, hope, and righteousness in the story of the Noahic flood?

What "Babels" have you built in your own life, and how is God's grace revealed to you in the middle of such edifices?

Act 2 - Covenant

Scene One: The Creation of Israel (Days 14-17)

Bible Texts: Genesis 12:1-3, 7a; Exodus 6:2-8; 19:3-6; 40:34-38

Questions:

- What does God's faithfulness to Abraham mean for our life with God today?
- How does the theme of liberation look in your life, and what are some of the behaviors and thoughts from which you need liberation?
- In what ways are you a light in the darkness?
- In what ways do you experience the presence of God?

Scene Two: God's Gifts to Israel (Days 16-22)

Bible Texts: Joshua 11:23; 1 Samuel 8:4-9; Romans 9:4-5; Psalm 19:7-10;
Romans 3:1-2

Questions:

- In what way is land still part of our inheritance as disciples of Jesus, and what does this mean for our discipleship and hope?
- Why was having a human king a bad idea for Israel?
- Which gift to Israel do you find particularly helpful in your understanding of your own experience with God?
- How is the Torah a positive part of our life with God?
- What is the function of Scripture?

Scene Three: Israel's Tumble and Exile (Days 23-29)

Bible Texts: 2 Chronicles 29:29-30; Psalm 19:14; Proverbs 9:9-10; Amos 5:15, 24; Zechariah 7:9-12; Malachi 3:1-2

Questions:

- What is your own family story, and how does it shape you even now?
- How have songs and prayers, including the Psalms, shaped your own experience of life?
- How have you played the role of the "simple" in life as you wavered between wise and foolish choices?
- What are some of the spiritual idolatries of our time and some of the spiritual adulteries of the church?
- What, in Zechariah's message, do we need to hear today?
- How might we prepare for the coming of the reign of God in our own time?

Act 3 - Christ

Scene One: The Son Sent into the World (Days 30-32)

Bible Texts: Galatians 4:4-7; John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 2:14-18

Questions:

What role does each person of the Trinity play in the work of redemption for the sake of the world?

What is the significance of saying Jesus experienced the world just like we experience it, that is, from a limited, developing, and maturing perspective?

Which of the reasons given above as to why God became a human being are most significant to you and most impact your life with God?

Scene Two: Ministry of Jesus (Days 33-39)

Bible Texts: Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-2a; Matthew 4:13-17; Luke 4:16-21; 4:40-43

Questions:

Why was Jesus baptized, and what does this say about your own baptism?

Why did God send Jesus into the wilderness? What did Jesus gain from that experience?

Why is the coming of the reign of God "good news"?

What is the mission of Jesus?

Did Jesus Preach the Gospel? What is the gospel in his preaching and doing?

Scene Three: The Messiah Comes to the Temple (Days 40-45)

Bible Texts: Luke 9:18-21; 28-36a; 10:17-20; Mark 10:41-45; 11:15-18; 12:28-34

Questions:

What does the cross of Jesus represent to you? What does it mean to confess that Jesus is the Messiah?

What did the transfiguration mean for Jesus, and what does it mean for his disciples?

Name some moments and times in your life or in the lives of others when you have seen Satan fall.

In what ways has "church" become a "den of robbers"?

How is loving our neighbor a way of loving God, and what does that look like?

Scene Four: Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation of Jesus (Days 46-53)

Bible Texts: Mark 14:22-25; Luke 24:32-47; Mark 15:33-37; Matthew 28:5-10; Luke 24:30-35; Matthew 28:18-20

Questions:

What do the bread and cup share with those who eat and drink?

Though evil surrounds Jesus on the cross, how does he bear witness to the kingdom of God, and how do we imitate Jesus in our own lives?

In what way did God abandon Jesus? In what way did God not abandon him?

What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus?

In what ways do you experience the living Christ at the table of the Lord?

What is the significance of the "Great Commission" of Jesus the Messiah?

Act 4 - Church

Scene One: The Spirit Sent into our Hearts (Days 54-57)

Bible Texts: Acts 1:6-8; Ephesians 1:20-23; Acts 2:16-21; Galatians 6:14-16

Questions:

- In what ways did Jesus prepare his disciples for their future witness?
- What is the meaning of the exaltation of Jesus as Lord, and why is this an important moment in the life of Jesus?
- How is Pentecost revolutionary and earth-shaking?
- In what ways do you experience new creation in your life?

Scene Two: The Formation of Community (Days 58-64)

Bible Texts: Acts 2:37-47; 3:1; 5:42; 20:7-12; Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-12

Questions:

- Do you remember your baptism? What was it like, and why were you baptized?
- Why is assembly important for Christian formation, and how does the assembly form people as disciples of Jesus?
- What did the apostles teach and emphasize in the book of Acts?
- In what ways do you experience comfort and joy at the table of the Lord?
- In what ways have you experienced Acts 2 kind of "fellowship" among disciples of Jesus?
- In your experience, are disciples of Jesus devoted to prayer?
- What is the relationship between leaders and followers, and what should characterize this relationship?

Scene Three: A Gifted, Sent Community (Days 65-70)

Bible Texts: Acts 2:47b; 4:23-31; 6:7; 12:24; Revelation 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 12:5-7

Questions:

- What does it mean for the church to "be fruitful and multiply" and thus embrace the creation mandate as well as fulfill the mission of Israel?
- How might we fulfill the mission to "subdue the powers" in our context, and what does that look like?
- Is the original mandate in creation to shepherd the creation still part of the mission of the disciples of Jesus, and why do you think so, or not?
- How is the Holy Spirit the means of communion between God and humanity, and what does that look like?
- What is transformation, and how is the Spirit involved in our transformation?
- What are your gifts, and how have you used them for the sake of the body of Christ as well as for the world?

Act 5 - Consummation (New Creation)

Scene One: Suffering and Hope (Days 71-74)

Bible Texts: Romans 5:1-5; 8:18-27; Hebrews 5:5-10

Questions:

In what ways do you experience life "in-between the times", between what is "already" and what is "not yet"?

What does God's response to suffering in Jesus tell us about suffering?

Why is lament so difficult or feel so "unchristian" to many disciples of Jesus?

In what ways do you experience new creation in your life?

Is it possible, in this moment or in relation to the past, to boast in your suffering?

Scene Two: Resurrection: Jesus, Believers, and the Cosmos (Days 75-77)

Bible Texts: 1 Corinthians 15:21-28, 50-57; 2 Peter 3:11-13

Questions:

How does one grieve with hope in the light of the resurrection of Jesus?

What will we be like in the resurrection?

Why is it important to think about the resurrection of creation as part of the story of God?

Scene Three: The Eternal Home (Days 78-80)

Bible Texts: Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-7; 22:1-5

Questions:

What in our present world needs to be set right, and how does divine judgment address it?

How is communion a dynamic reality over against a static one in our eternal home?

What do you imagine life on the new earth will be like, and how does it continue the journey we have begun on this present earth?