
The ONE Story

A journaling Bible study
by Kay Daigle

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What is The ONE Story?

Growing up in church, I knew all the major stories of the Bible by the time I was six. I knew the gospel, the good news about Jesus, and I knew that he was returning to earth someday. What escaped me was how all of this fit together. I believed in its truth, but to me the Old Testament stories had little to do with those in the New Testament and no relationship to Jesus's return.

In my 30's I finally participated in a Bible study that pulled it all together. I was overwhelmed by the realization that there was ONE story behind the individual narratives. Although the biblical accounts felt disconnected when approached in isolation, they are all tied to God's bigger plan. He has been at work throughout the centuries and in his people to bring the story to its conclusion.

Because many churches have now recognized the need to emphasize the unity of the Bible and the big story behind it, you may not be as ignorant about it as I was. But there is another great reason to study the ONE story, the Meta-narrative or Grand Narrative. Our culture values stories because they infuse learning with reality and heart. We no longer want religion or ethics that is hypothetical; we want to understand how it affects real life. Stories show faith in real life, and the meta-narrative reveals its unity.

That's what the Bible brings us—real stories of flesh and blood people whose lives connected with God's ONE story. By journaling about them, we not only understand the bigger picture, but we also grasp more deeply how it affects us and calls us to be part of it. We aren't merely students of the ONE story, but we are participants in it.

The one God is great. He has a plan which he will accomplish according to his timing. And he wants you and me to join him in his work.

Kay Daigle

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What to know about this study guide

Simple doesn't equate to shallow

This study demands your involvement. Although the layout is simple, how deeply you go depends on you. As you spend time talking to God and journaling your thoughts, he may lead you to other cross-references, but he will certainly give you insights into the stories. Don't stop with initial surface answers, but ask God to clarify the story and speak to you from it. The time you spend in the scriptures with God gives him space to speak. Listen well, journal your thoughts, share them with your small group, and glean from others' insights.

Each week has 3 parts

If you like doing a little study at a time, the study is set up in 3 parts, but feel free to do it any way that works best for you. If you prefer daily time in the Word, consider spending 2 days on each part, journaling about the optional starred section on the second day. You may be amazed at what you see by reading the story multiple times. If you prefer to do the week's study in one sitting, you may want to read all the passages first and then journal at the end. Of course, it's great to be in God's Word each day, but you may have other ways of doing that. Stick to what works for your schedule.

Additional reading and background information

I will often insert background information pertinent to understanding the story. Always feel free to do your own research as you have interest or questions, but focus the group conversation on the passages and stories studied by everyone.



A star identifies optional verses or suggested study for those with time and interest. The additional reading may help you wrestle with deeper insights into the passages.

Bible verses

The verses that begin each week's lesson are great choices for memorization, but they are long. Consider choosing and learning a verse or two from the passage as a group.

What you need

- A quiet place, if possible!
- A Bible that you can understand. If you don't have one, ask your group leader for suggestions, or email us at info@beyondordinarywomen.org. Modern versions are available as downloads, through Bible apps, or in print at any bookstore. (We are using netbible.org which is a free online Bible translation with study helps.)
- A notebook, laptop, or tablet to use as a journal which can be taken to your group meetings. If you prefer paper attached to the lesson, add a blank piece of paper or notebook paper after each lesson. (See Journaling 101 in the Appendix.)
- The commitment to listen to God and write out what you hear as you read and pray
- Someone, or even better a group of women, to discuss this with you and provide support, encouragement, and spiritual challenge
- This link to BOW's free short 5-8 minute videos of women sharing their stories of how knowing Jesus intersected with their lives. Go to <https://vimeo.com/beyondordinarywomen/collections> and click on The ONE Story collection. Watch the video numbered to match the week either before or after you journal the lesson.

Best practices for your group get-togethers (See Appendix & Videos)

Plan a regular place, time, and leader.

The leader should—

- watch the free, short video *Tips for Leading a Journaling Study* at <https://vimeo.com/190999125> and *Listening Well* with Cheri Hudspith at <https://vimeo.com/album/4065298>.
- start on time, not waiting for late arrivals
- move the group along, being sensitive to God's Spirit
- encourage everyone to share without forcing it
- be a great encourager
- avoid dominating the conversation
- keep the focus on the women, not herself and her own stories
- provide time for the group to think and share from their journals
- contact absent group members to encourage them
- email the group weekly to remind them of the upcoming meeting, provide the weekly video link, and share her excitement

As a group

- come prepared and on time with your study, journal, and Bible
- share freely and honestly
- encourage one another
- don't interrupt the speaker
- love one another
- don't try to fix the other members of your group or their problems by giving advice
- pray for one another and entrust each other and your problems to God
- be honest and vulnerable, but wise in how much detail you share personally
- stay in touch with each other between meetings for support and encouragement

If your group meets within a larger group in a church setting

- Look for a woman who is gifted in teaching God's Word to teach a short time after the small group discussion. Watch the short, free video *Why Use Live Teachers, not Video?* at <https://vimeo.com/209323216>. (For help in preparing to teach, see our collection of videos at <http://beyondordinarywomen.org/bible-teaching/>.)
- Because the discussion isn't about the teacher's comments but focuses on the members' personal study, the discussion should precede the teaching time.
- The teacher may spend 15- 25 minutes adding to the background of the lesson, beginning and ending within the allotted time frame. The majority of the time together should be invested in small groups.
- The teacher's role is to clarify and extend what the group has studied, not to retell the stories they have discussed.
- Each week the leader should send the group the link to our 5-8 minute video highlighting a woman's story that connects to the lesson. The women watch them individually online. The collection is found at <https://vimeo.com/beyondordinarywomen/collections>.

Week One: Paradise, Ruin, & Promise

God saw all that he had made – and it was very good! There was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day. The heavens and the earth were completed with everything that was in them. By the seventh day God finished the work that he had been doing, and he ceased on the seventh day all the work that he had been doing.

Genesis 1:31-2:2

*What is the ONE story? It is the story behind the stories of the Bible—the big picture. We will summarize it in four parts: **Paradise, Ruin, Reconciliation, and Consummation.** (Other people use different words. It's fine if you prefer another one, but your group discussions should be consistent with the ones used here.) The stories we read will connect them as we move fairly chronologically through biblical history. (We may skip to New Testament passages at times to help us better understand the Old Testament verses we are studying.)*

This topic is a great place to begin studying the Bible for yourself if you have never done so. It's like putting the edges on a jigsaw puzzle; it provides the framework inside which all the other pieces fit.

If you are uncertain how to do a journaling study, go to the Appendix and read the section entitled Journaling 101. We refer to this as an inductive study because we each wrestle with the text ourselves first by observing what it says, what it means, and how it applies. The open-ended questions in each part of the lesson will facilitate that process, but feel free to journal about any of the story that God uses to speak to your heart.

At the same time we must always keep in mind that we can't just make up what God is saying because we think or feel it. In fact this lesson warns us not to be drawn by our feelings or desires. The application must fit the interpretation, the point of the author, or we risk misspeaking for God.

Part One

The ONE Story begins with **Paradise**, the perfect world. This is what God intended for his creation—a place we can only dream of.

Read Genesis 1-2. (If you are unfamiliar with scriptural addresses that point to the location of the verses, here is a short explanation: numbers without colons or preceding colons are chapters in one of the sixty-six books of the Bible; numbers following colons indicate specific verses in that chapter.)



Meditatively read Psalm 96, a psalm of praise to God the Creator. Then, journal your thoughts and write out your prayer of praise.

Respond to the story by journaling:

- What do these chapters reveal about who God is and what he can do?
- How does Paradise differ from the world you live in?
- What is God saying to you about your relationship with him as you meditate on these scriptures?

Part Two

Paradise did not last. Perfection became **Ruin** when people went their own way and turned from God, making gods of themselves. Their choices had consequences to their relationships with God and one another and affected all of creation.

Read Genesis 3:1-13.



Read Matthew 4:1-11, comparing Jesus's victory over temptation to this temptation.

Respond to the story by journaling:

- What insights do you have into temptation from this story? Be sure to compare the words of the serpent and God (Gen. 2:16-17). If you have time, you may want to read James 1:12-15.
- How do you see this first sin affect the relationships between God and people and also between the man and woman?
- What is God saying to you today about your own life?

This sad story isn't an isolated case because we all choose to go our own way, essentially being our own gods, just as the first couple did.

Part Three

***Ruin** is an apt description for the world that we now know. No longer Paradise, the earth is ruled by death, dysfunction, and broken relationships—sin. All of us as descendants of the first couple inherited the dysfunctional go-to tendency to put ourselves at the center of our lives rather than God. Our world grew increasingly darker with the presence of sin and death. All that was good in people or the world itself was not destroyed, but it was now marred by the events of this story.*

*But God is gracious, and he continues working in the midst of **Ruin** to redeem his creation. As you read the verses below, consider how you see the grace of God, his actions toward us that are merciful and undeserved, even in judgment.*

Read Genesis 3:14-24.

Pay particular attention to God's promise in the last part of v.15 (noted as b, the second point).

The notes in the ESV says this about Genesis 15b:

. . . it has traditionally been understood as pointing forward to the defeat of the serpent by a future descendant of the woman, and this interpretation fits well with the words and the context. This defeat is implied by the serpent's being bruised in the head, which is more serious than the offspring of Eve being

bruised in the heel. For this reason, v. 15 has been labeled the “Protoevangelium,” the first announcement of the gospel. This interpretation requires that the serpent be viewed as more than a mere snake, something which the narrative itself implies While the present chapter does not explicitly identify the serpent with Satan, such an identification is a legitimate inference and is clearly what the Apostle John had in mind in Rev. 12:9 and 20:2.¹

★ Journal your thoughts on Romans 3:9-18 and its relationship to Genesis 3.

Respond to the story by journaling:

- What insights or even questions come to mind concerning the announced consequences of sin?
- What does the story reveal about God’s grace and his justice?
- What is God saying to you today for your own life?

*As soon as sin enters the world, God reveals that it will not win, **Ruin** will not last forever, and hope is in the woman’s child. As we read more Old Testament stories over the next few weeks, we will see God provide more and more details to his plan to send this hero of the ONE Story to defeat the enemy.*

As Isaiah later prophesied about this coming Promised One, “All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but the Lord caused the sin of all of us to attack him” (Isaiah 53:6).

Watch the video story that accompanies this lesson.

Next week: *God provides more details about the Promised One.*

¹ Note on Genesis 3:15, *ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, (Wheaton, IL: 2008).