

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-1 Introduction

Would you like to hear the greatest story ever told? Most people would, but what is it?

This lesson begins a course on evangelism. It starts right at the beginning of everything. Before defining what evangelism is or deciding what this greatest story is, we must ask why we human beings are here. We must go back to the basic account of creation. The story of God's plan to forgive sin is the greatest story ever told. It begins in the Garden of Eden. God said "Let us make man in our image ... male and female he created them" (Gen 1:26-27).

So from the very beginning all human beings are in this together. All humans are created by him, in his image, to walk with him in the world he made. They were to share his dominion, his rule and reign over creation. God wanted them to be with him for all eternity. Sounds great, doesn't it?

But something bad happened. Satan tempted the humans and they fell into sin. Their sin was disobedience, doing exactly what God had told them not to do. They believed Satan's lies and did what he wanted, not what God wanted. The results of sin included Adam and Eve being put out of the Garden. Sin resulted in their first son murdering their second son. And the Bible records this story of human selfishness and disobedience that continues down through time.

Every culture in every land reflects the results of sin in the lives of humans. Sin destroys God's creation and the closeness he wants with people. That's why God hates sin so much. Yet, he still loves his creation—all men and women. Because of their disobedience men must toil the land in hardship, and women must endure the pain of childbirth. They are not banished from God's fellowship altogether, but their relationship with him was not to be the same until Jesus came.

The good news is that the greatest story doesn't end there—with humans being condemned. As early as the story of creation, even in the garden itself, God made a way for mankind. Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness before God. They felt guilt due to their sin. But God sacrificed animals and took their skins to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness. So the idea of the need for a sacrifice to cover human sin goes way back to the beginning. Animal sacrifices become the start of the system that is laid out in God's first covenant, or contract, with his people. We read about this old covenant in the Old Testament part of the Bible.

In fact, the entire Old Testament can be summed up as the story of the covenants God made to forgive the humans of their sins. They wanted to go their own way instead of God's way. Humans kept breaking the contract with God and he just kept making new ones. This story is told over and over in the Old Testament. God's forgiveness can be summed up in one Hebrew word, *hesed*, which means the "everlasting loving-kindness" of God. This loving-kindness, or grace of God, is poured out repeatedly on undeserving sinful humans. Grace restores us back into fellowship with God time after time.

The Old Testament law is clear that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sins. God, however, had a plan from the beginning of time to provide a more perfect sacrifice than the blood of animals. It would do away with the Old Testament sacrificial system. The New Testament explains the fulfillment of God's plan to cover the sins of all mankind. God came in human form and shed his blood once, for all. This is the mystery of the Incarnation. God himself came in flesh—as a tiny baby. It took a miracle of conception through the Holy Spirit. He was 100% God and 100% man at the same time. The Incarnation is a divine mystery, and not easily explained. However, this was God's plan even before creation.

So the entire story of the old covenant is about God's grace being poured out through his *loving-kindness* over and over again. But the story of the new covenant is the climax of the whole old covenant system of blood sacrifice for covering humankind's sin. The Son came in human form and shed his blood for the sins of all people who would believe in him.

This is not a story made up by someone, as it is so unbelievable! Only God could have made such a plan, to give his human creation the free will to choose. They could obey him in holiness or disobey him in sinfulness. What writer could imagine such a thing? Even more so, who would think of such a God that would then become a human and die a painful death on a cross? It is totally contrary to what a human could conceive.

For most people, it is a matter of being kind, doing good deeds, or perhaps living several lives before being restored back into fellowship with God for eternity. But no, the Father chose to have his Son, who was a part of the Godhead from the beginning, to come and die. By dying Jesus took the punishment we deserved for our sins.

This, then, is the greatest story ever told. It began in the Garden of Eden and continued to Christ's death on the Cross and resurrection from the dead. This story is the good news that must be shared with every person on earth. It is the basic message of the gospel, "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" (John 3:16). Every person on earth can share in eternal life with Christ, if only they will believe in him.

God also has a part for you to play in this greatest story ever told. The role for believers in this story is what we call *evangelism*. The remainder of this course will be about doing what God has told us to do in his Scriptures. You are to *evangelize*. That means you will tell others the salvation story and invite them into the relationship that God wants with them. You will learn more about sharing your spiritual journey with others and asking them to join you. God so loved humankind, sinful men and women, that he gave his Son to die for them. We must love them enough to share with them the good news of how their sins can be forgiven and how they can have eternal life with God.

This story is **important** because it reveals that the plan of God, from the very beginning, was to bring forgiveness to humankind, and to use men and women to share his message.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God wants us to be involved in evangelism, sharing our spiritual journey, by telling others the story of Christ's death and resurrection.

Let's **review** this lesson by answering the following questions—

1. Where does the greatest story ever told begin? [Pause 5 seconds.]
A. If you said, “The story begins at creation, in the Garden of Eden,” you are correct.
2. What did God do to provide a covering for Adam and Eve after they sinned? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “God shed the blood of animals to use their skins to provide covering for Adam and Eve,” you are correct.
3. Why did God provide humans with forgiveness under the old covenant? [Pause]
A. If you said, “God provided forgiveness because by nature he is a God of ‘everlasting loving-kindness’ or *hesed*, to those who follow him,” you answered correctly.
4. What is the greatest story ever told? [Pause]
A. If you said, “The greatest story ever told is the account of Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection as the sacrifice for human sin,” you are right.

Your **assignment** is to memorize this verse: “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” (John 3:16). Then listen to the greatest story ever told, as explained in this lesson, until you feel comfortable telling it to other people. Practice telling the story to others to get their response.

Share the verse you have memorized from John 3:16. Perhaps some will believe the story of Jesus and will want to start a new relationship with their heavenly Father. Give them your testimony—how you came to receive Christ. Then pray with anyone who wants to start their own journey.