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BIBLE CHURCH | AUSTIN

THE **BIG** PICTURE



CURRENT SERIES

The Beginning

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April 14, 2013

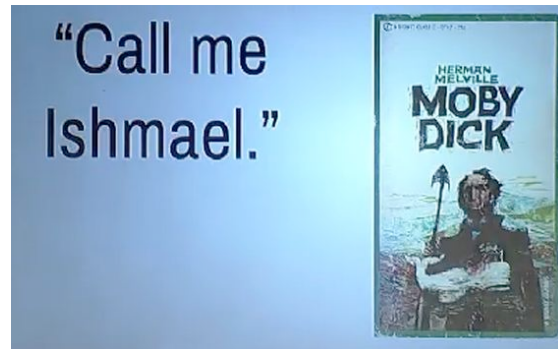
Good morning. I don't know if you're excited about this or not, but last week I was listening to Tim introduce The Big Picture series, and I was stoked and

getting ready to preach this first section so if you've got your Bibles and your book here, we're going to start going through the book of Genesis.

The Beginning. And believe it or not we're going to cover all 50 chapters in the next few minutes, so put your seatbelt on right. Get your Bibles and your book and let's jump in.

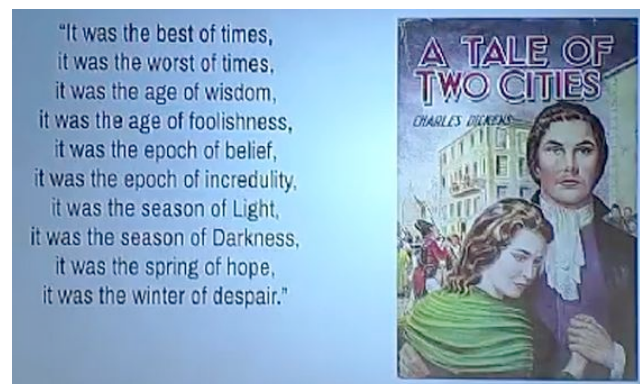


As we think through that, The Beginning, one of the reasons I was excited about it is because every story has a great beginning. Our story is no different than that. I was actually thinking of some great lines, opening lines to some literature and other things, so maybe you might recognize a few of these openings here.

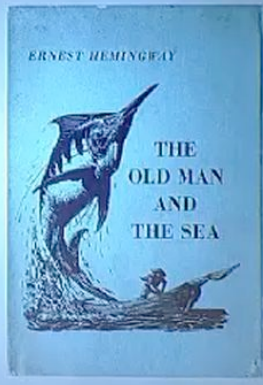


"Call Me Ishmael", what's that from? Yeah, *Moby Dick*, we got that one.

How about, how about this one, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

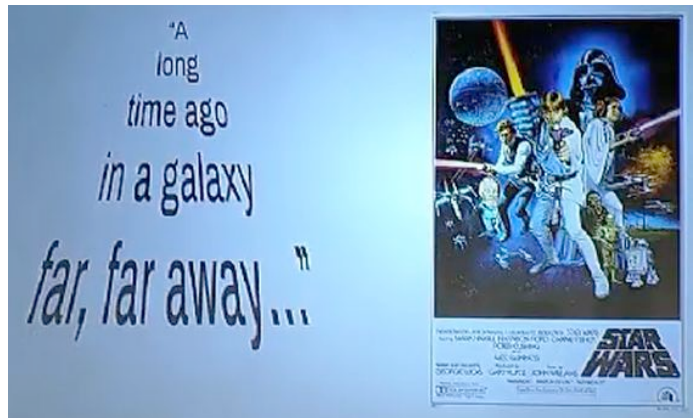


"He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish."



"It was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish." *Old Man and the Sea*, me and my dad read that when we were in high school.

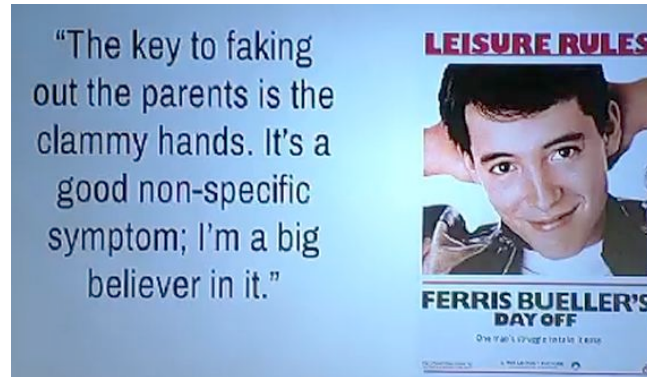
For us non-readers, here you go (congregation laughs), a little Star Wars action there. That one needs no introduction.



"I'm 36 years old, I love my family, I love baseball, and I'm about to become a farmer. But until I heard the voice, I'd never done a crazy thing in my whole life."

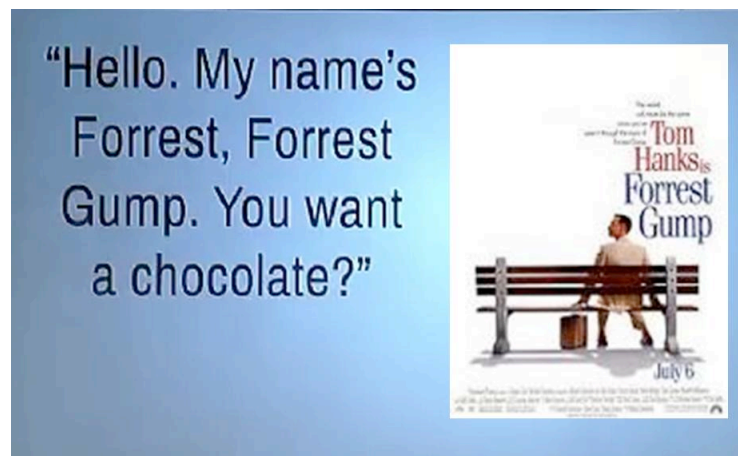
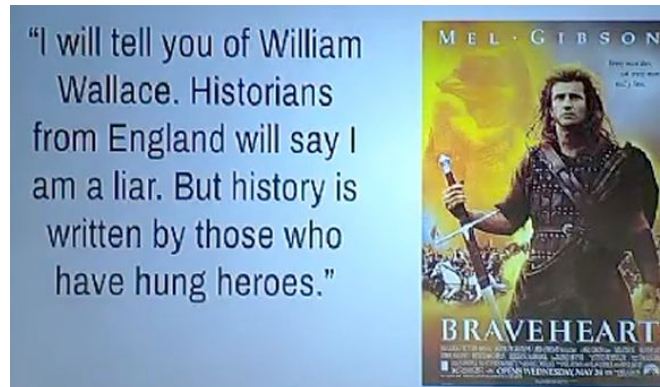


How about this one, a great movie - "I'm 36 years old, I love my family, I love baseball, and I'm about to become a farmer, but until I heard the voice I had never done a crazy thing in my whole life." *Field of Dreams*, right? Great opening line.



How about this, “The key to faking out the parents is the clammy hands. It’s a good non-specific symptom. I’m a big believer in it.” Come on my generation, right here – *Ferris Bueller*.

More inspirational, “I will tell you of William Wallace. Historians from England will say I’m a liar. But history is written by those who have hung heroes. *Braveheart*, right? What a great opening line.



And then finally, an American classic, *Forrest Gump* – “You want some chocolate?”

Every story has a great opening line. It’s got an opening, it’s got this thing that draws you in. I was reading one literary critic who said, opening line is like

somebody who grabs you by the nostrils and pulls your whole head into a book and will not let you escape. It's that idea, those of us who are readers, you know you get that book and you start reading and you don't want to put it down. Or those of us who start watching a new T.V. series and you want to watch the whole thing. Or maybe a movie, you get in there and you don't want to leave and you don't want it to end. There's just nothing like those great beginnings, those great stories. Not only that, but every story has some other common themes, doesn't it? Every story has that perfect beginning, that once upon a time there was a king and queen in the castle, and butterflies are flying around and bunnies are bouncing and deer are there and it's this perfect kingdom. That's the way stories are. They start with that, right? They start with this perfect kingdom, everything is good. It's like Frodo and his Hobbit buddies and the Shire before Gandalf shows up and says you're going to go on a journey.

Or maybe not only does every story have this calm beginning, how everything should be, this preferred future, but every story something awful happens, doesn't it? The enemy shows up, the bad guy comes in and wrecks everything. Bruce Wayne's hanging out with his millionaire buddies and the Joker shows up. Something awful happens. Or if Rocky, you know, it's not just that he's going to fight, but that Adrienne goes into a coma and now he's got to fight for something, right? Something awful happens.

And then not only that, but in all the stories somebody goes on a journey. Somebody goes on a journey, there's a battle to be fought. You know you think about Star Wars and Luke Skywalker going down to Death Star shooting stuff into that little hole. A journey, a battle, and then every story has got a hero that rises up at that very last possible second and saves the day. That's what stories are about.

And I would venture to say that the story we are fixing to embark on, this journey we're going to go through together as we go from Genesis to Revelation and we look at the big picture, even though those elements of the story are here I'm going to say this. I think all other stories borrow from this story. All other stories borrow a hero, they borrow the enemy, they borrow the perfect future, they borrow the journey, they borrow the sacrifice, they borrow all of that from the one big picture, the one big story, the only story that really matters -- the story of God. So if you're got your Bibles let's turn to Genesis 1 and let's take a look at it. Genesis 1, opening statement. Best opening statement ever, right here.



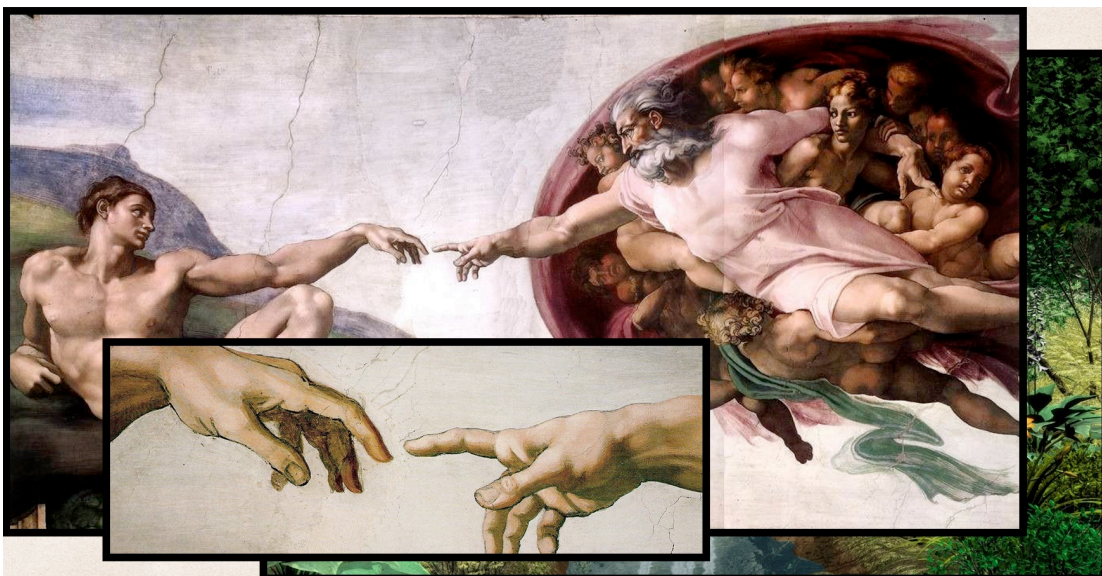
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Genesis 1:1. That’s how this thing starts. You could spend weeks unpacking that verse, but this is what we know is that God speaks and he creates. There is a God, he is separate from creation, and

he is going to bring everything into existence from nothing. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. We know this, that in the rest of chapter one and two that he is going to bring forth light, fish, birds, animals, plants. You name it he’s creating it. This is what is happening in Genesis 1, that creation is taking place.

Not only that, but look at verses 26 and 27 of chapter one.

“Then 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.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”



Not only is God going to create all that we see, he's also going to create mankind and he's going to create man in his own image. Man is going to take somehow the image of God and he speaks it into existence. He breathes life into humanity. And this is the start of the story - it's pretty good, isn't it?

Not only that, but look at verse 31 of chapter one.

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."

It's perfect. We know in Chapter 2 of Genesis that there are four rivers, it's a beautiful place, it's where you would want to be. There's no crying, there's no loss, there's no death, there's no shame, there's no sin.

Look at the end of Chapter 2 in Verse 25 it says:

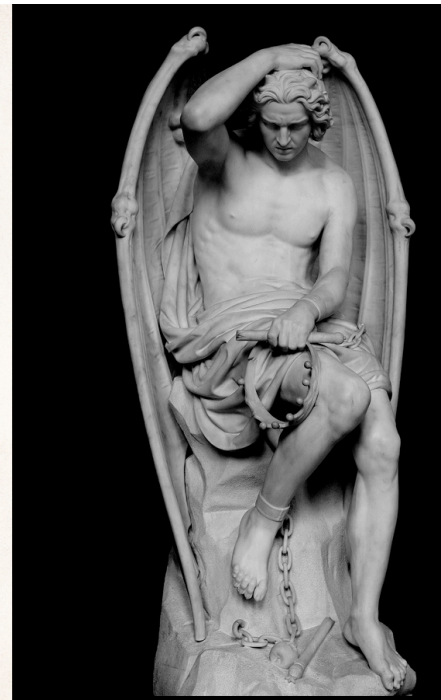
"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."



When you read this you sit back and say, I want to be there. That's the perfect place. Anywhere you can go and have perfect creation with nothing wrong, perfect man, perfect woman, no shame walking with God. That is where you want to be. That's what we call the Garden of Eden. It's that perfect place and that's how the story starts.

Like I said, it doesn't take long for something awful to happen does it? An enemy needs to be introduced and he'll be introduced right here in Chapter 3:1, he says,

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"



Adam and Eve were given one command and one command only. They have so much that they can pick from. All the stuff that they can eat, all of the things that they can do. They were told to bear fruit and multiply. They were told to rule and subdue the earth. And one thing they were told not to do is to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, that was it. That was the one command, don't do that. You'd think they could handle it. But we have the enemy who shows up. We find out as we walk through The Big Picture, he's got names like the devil or Satan or Lucifer. He twists God's word, he twists the command, he tricks and tempts Adam and Eve into eating from the tree that they weren't supposed to eat from, and sure enough, they do it. And they take of this fruit, and as you read Genesis 3, you think, no big deal. It's just a little fruit, it's a little sin, right? It's not that big of a deal. But we find out that this becomes a very big deal. It becomes a huge deal as sin begins to enter mankind and begins to spiral out of control.

We learn that Adam and Eve are kicked out of this perfect place. No longer are they in the presence of God because they have rebelled, they've sinned, they've let sin enter into the world, they brought it in because of their decision to disobey God. And not only does it affect them, but it affects their offspring.



Look at Chapter 4, we have Cain and Abel. In Cain and Abel you have Adam and Eve having two sons, and these sons have sibling rivalry and they argue over an offering and a sacrifice. And one is jealous, and Cain kills his brother. Can you believe that? Killing, murder - we're only in Chapter 4. We're a chapter removed from the perfect place, and all they did was eat that little fruit.

We're finding out this is a bigger deal, this sin issue, this rebellion issue isn't just about a tree. It's about our hearts and it seeps in and it grows, and we become very wicked.

As a matter of fact, look at Chapter 6 of Genesis and see how far it goes. Not only is there murder with Cain and Abel, not only does this just affect the first family, but look at verses 5 and 6 of Chapter 6:

“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”

God looks up and sees this creation and he sees the wickedness, or another word there would be violence. They are killing each other, they’re harming each other, they’re bringing pain into the world, and sin is spiraling out of control. So what is God going to do? God’s got to bring punishment, God’s got to bring consequence to sin and to rebellion. Because of sin and because of that rebellion the punishment is going to be that he’s going to wipe out everybody except for one man, Noah. And at this point you’re thinking, is Noah the savior?



Is Noah the guy that’s going to rescue everybody? Noah’s found favor. God tells him, I want you to build a big boat and I want you get two of every kind on the boat. He does it, it floods for 40 days and 40 nights, wipes out everything. They get to start over.

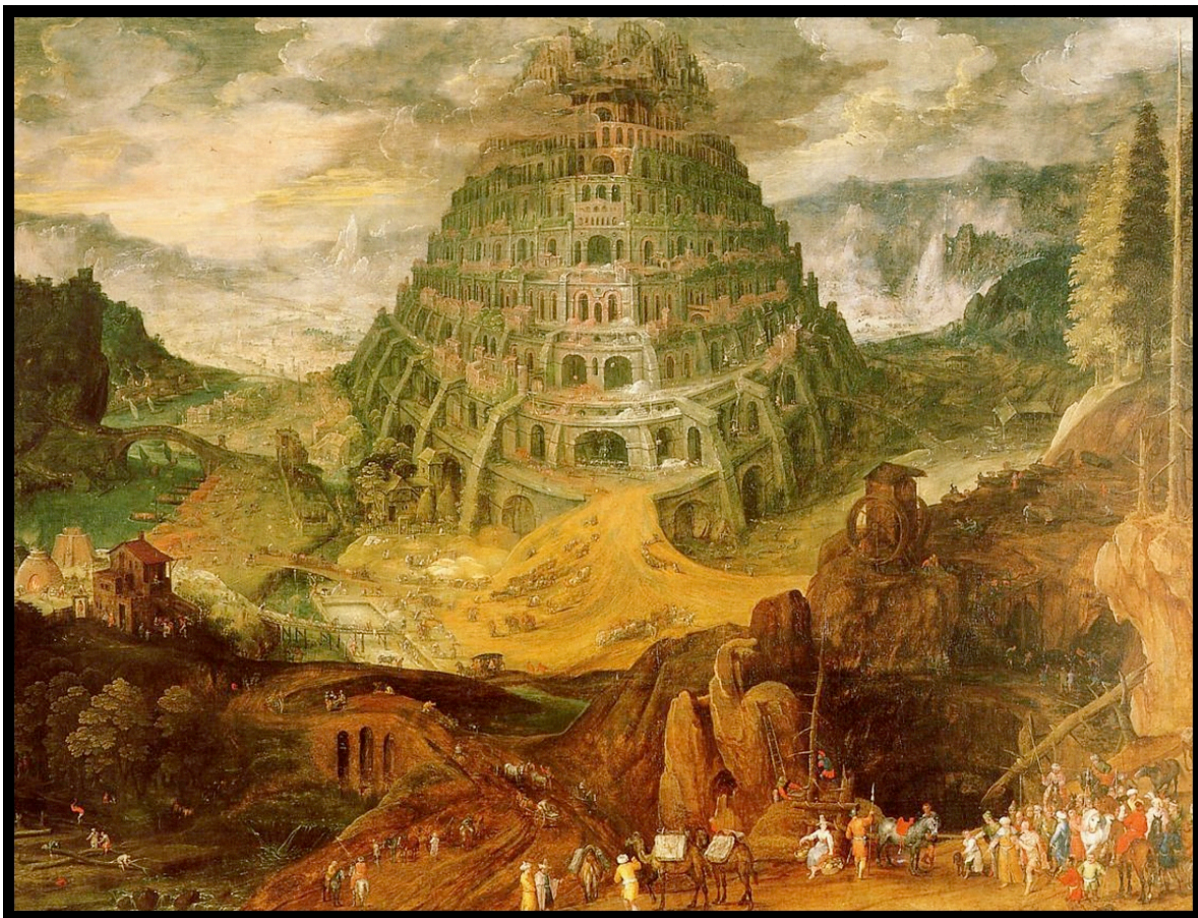
They even get to start over with a rainbow in the sky that says I’ll never flood the earth again. And at this point you can kind of wipe the sweat off your brow and say, we’ve made it, we got a fresh start. Everything is going to be good from here, right?

Not so much because Noah’s going to blow it with his sons. He’s going to have a terrible incident there, and then we’re going to find out that the sin issue still wasn’t taken care of even though there is consequences, even though there is punishment. We find out that sin continues to build and to swell and that

mankind gets arrogant and prideful. Matter of fact, take a look at it in Genesis 11, see how it builds some more and swells some more, and spirals further out of control. Verse 3 and 4 of Chapter 11 it says,

“They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.””

They build this huge tower and in proclamation they say, we built this, we made these stones. We mixed this mortar, we did this, and it’s going to go into the heavens and it’s going to be a declaration to everybody, including God, that we are something. We still struggle with that today, don’t we? A name for ourselves they said.



Just spiraling out of control so God’s response to the Tower of Babel was very clear. I’ve got to scatter them all over the earth. I’m going to change their

language and there are going to be different nations all abroad so that they would never do this again.

And we find out from these first 11 chapters of Genesis that there's a storyline that we're going to have to deal with for the rest of The Big Picture. Are you ready? Here it is. The storyline of this primeval period of Adam and Eve, Noah, the Tower of Babel, the Flood, the Fall, is that **God created Adam, but he sins and destroys God's original plan for man.** Adam is created, but he sins and he destroys God's original plan for man. God's original plan for man wasn't to be scattered. God's original plan for man wasn't to be wiped out with a flood. God's original plan for man wasn't to live apart from him. God's original plan for man was to live in perfect harmony and unity with God in his presence in a perfect place, but because of sin it destroyed the original plan.

So now what are we going to do? Now what is God going to do? This is his creation. This is his people. He's got to answer this problem and he does so. Look at Genesis 12. Things begin to change.

"The Lord had said to Abram," verse 1, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all people on the earth will be blessed through you."

So God looks at Abram and says, you know what, I'm not done with them yet. Even though if it were me and I were God it would be over at this point. I've given you time after time, chance after chance, but no God looks down and says I made them, I created them, I have a plan for them and this is what I need you to do Abraham. Are you ready? I need you to go on a journey and I need you to leave everything you know. I need you to leave those false gods, I need you to leave your livelihood, your family, what's comfortable, and I need you to follow after me in faith because I'm going to make you a great nation, and I'm going to give you some land. But most importantly this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to bless every single person on the planet through you. That's pretty cool, isn't it? What an amazing thought. After the Fall, after Cain and Abel, after the Flood, after the Tower of Babel, God is still concerned with humanity and now he's going to use one man to do it. Are you ready for how the storyline shifts now?

With Abraham and his sons and his descendants, this is what God is doing. God is calling Abraham. He called Abraham to "father" a people to be his representative to God in the world. It's what he's doing. The storyline from

here on out as we look at the rest of Genesis is **Abraham is called by God to father a people to represent God to the world.** That's what he did. Called him out, wanted him to father a people to represent God. God said I need a representative and it needs to be a group of people and they're going to need to love me, they're going to need to follow me, they're going to need to trust me and Abraham you're going to start it. So Abraham does.

He follows and he goes off - he's 75 years old when this happens in Genesis 12. He and his wife have no kids, they're unable to have kids. They go on a long journey, it's a 25-year journey. Here they are thinking they're going to have kids. Abraham doesn't do the best of things all the time. He lies a little bit, calls his wife his sister, he tries to get a kid by some crazy means. Finally after 25 years God kept his word and God gave them a son, and that son's name was Isaac. And then in one of the most incredible stories in all of Genesis, God looks at Abraham, who he had been waiting for a child for 25 years, and God said I want you to sacrifice that son. I want you to show everybody that you don't love anything more than you love me. Not even the son you've been waiting for your entire life. And you know what? Abraham does it.

He picks up the knife and he holds it up as he's fixing to sacrifice his son, and



God says "Wait, don't touch the boy." And right after he says that, listen to God's word in Genesis 22 verses 17 and 18. Listen and see if this sounds familiar. Right after God says don't touch the boy he says this:

"I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring,"

Who's the offspring right now? Isaac.

"through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,"

So God's looking for this group of people to represent him and he made the promise to Abraham. He's going to make the promise to Isaac. Isaac's going to have two boys, Jacob and Essau. God's going to continue this promise on to Jacob. Jacob has a crazy dream one night. He sees angels going up and down a ladder called Jacob's ladder, and then listen to what God says to him in this dream. See if this sounds familiar -- Chapter 28 verse 13:

"There above it," that ladder where the angels are going up and down it, "stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on the earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

God has promised it to Abraham, he's promised it to Isaac, he's promised it to Jacob, and he's making it clear I need representatives. I need you to follow me. I want you to represent me to the world so I can bless everyone. I'm going to make you a great nation. Jacob says you know what? If that's the truth we better get after it. He decides he's going to have a bunch of descendants, 12 sons. Twelve sons. Let's take a look at them.

JACOB'S 12 SONS (THE 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL)

By Leah:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun

By Rachel's servant, Bilhah:

Dan, Naphtali

By Leah's servant, Zilpah:

Gad, Asher

By Rachel:

Joseph, Benjamin

He marries Rachel, that's his first love, but in the process of marrying Rachel he gets swindled into loving his sister Leah. He has to marry both of them. That makes for a fun Thanksgiving, doesn't it? So he's got Leah. Leah can have children, Rachel cannot at this point. Leah bears sons Reubin, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulum. Rachel sits back and says, "I may not be able to have children, but I have a maidservant I can give you." So Rachel's servant gives birth to Dan and Naphtali. Leah says, "Well I have a servant too." Let's have some more sons - Gad and Asher. At that point Rachel - God opens her womb graciously and she has two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. That's pretty cool isn't it? Twelve of those boys. I've got five kids and I can't imagine 12 of them, so let's just see this. Why this is important.

Jacob's going to wrestle with God and God's going to change his name to Israel. And how many tribes are going to be in Israel? Twelve. That's their namesake, that and some grandsons. So God was looking for a group of people to represent him on the earth and there they are. This is going to be the group that comes out of this. Jacob is going to be the father of Israel and the 12 tribes.

From Genesis 37 to 50 we're going to focus on one of those sons. His name is Joseph. The other 11 didn't like Joseph so much because Jacob loved him the most. Matter of fact, Jacob gave him a coat of many colors and said "I love you and I want, you know, you're my favorite." The other guys hated him so much they decided they were going to sell him into slavery.



In selling him into slavery they went back to their dad and said, "You know what? Joseph's dead. Joseph's dead. He got attacked by a wild animal," so they brought back the coat of many colors to their dad and it's got blood on it. As you can imagine, Jacob was devastated. His other 11 brothers - there was murder, there was incest,

prostitution -- you name it. It was not a pretty picture for this first fledgling group of people that are going to make up the nation of Israel.

Joseph, however, gets sold into slavery to Egypt. He's lied about, he's put in prison wrongly, he's framed, he's forgotten about, and all of a sudden he rises



to power in Egypt. He becomes #2 under Pharaoh all because he was able to help Egypt avoid death during a famine. So he rises to power, he helps Egypt make sure they have all the food they need after this famine, but the famine also affects Jacob and his 11 brothers. And his 11 brothers had forgotten all about Joseph. They said, "We don't care, we don't even know about him. He's probably dead." So guess who has the food? Egypt. And in the meantime Jacob says, "Hey why don't y'all go to Egypt to get some food." They show up and low and behold who's there? Joseph. This is where you think the story is going to get good, like he's just going to start killing them one-by-one, right - just in retribution. He doesn't. He says, "Dad, brothers, come on to Egypt. Come live with me." And in one of the most famous passages in all of Genesis, in Chapter 50, verse 20 listen to what Joseph says as his brothers are scared to death he's going to kill them. Verse 20 Joseph says,

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

You think of heroes here, right? The hero showed up, Joseph has showed grace. He's gone on this long journey, he followed after his dad Jacob, his granddad Isaac, his great granddad Abraham. He's going to be the leader of this people

who's going to represent God to all of the folks on the earth. Blessing is going to come. He's got his family together, he's going to take over Egypt, it's going to be great, right? Happily ever after. The only problem is we still have this much more to go, don't we. (congregation laughs)



Exodus 1 :8, I told you I was going to do the first 50 chapters of Genesis. Just one or two more verses, you ready? Exodus 1:8:

“Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them.”

Verse 11,

“So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor.”

And the Israelites become slaves in Egypt. The story goes on, the journey continues. Joseph wasn't the savior, Jacob wasn't the savior, Isaac wasn't the savior, Abraham, Noah. We're still waiting for someone to come and reconcile this, but in the meantime God has started a group of people that are going to represent him to the earth, and you're sitting back saying, “Thanks for the CliffsNotes version of Genesis.” But how does that apply to me? How does that apply to me?

I'm glad you asked. I think that Genesis and all of the Bible, but particularly here, has a specific impact on our worldview. Let me read to you what a worldview is. A worldview according to J. Scott Horrell says this: "Every person in every time of every culture has a world view. A worldview is a basic belief system, a framework through which we interpret reality around us. It's a grid through which we understand the universe and our place in it. A worldview is our set of assumptions by which we answer the basic questions of life. How we discern right from wrong and decide what is meaningful and what is not." Every person in this room has a worldview. Every person on the planet has a worldview. It's how we determine really what's important. How do we answer the basic questions of life. It's the structure that we determine what's right and wrong.

Let me give you three of the basic questions of life and show you how Genesis helps answer those. The first one is this: **Why does something exist instead of nothing?** Let me give you three worldview answers to that. The first one is atheism. Atheism is a worldview - they say there is no God and this is their response: "Something has always existed. The universe is a product of chance, time, and space." That is the atheistic worldview. That's their response to this question. Pantheism typically with Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism - those kind of religions. This is the way they answer the question: "Everything that exists is God." Everything is God. This is how Theism and specifically Christian Theism answers this question: "A personal God created all that exists from nothing. He is separate from creation." Genesis 1:1 tells us that, doesn't it. Because - I'm just going to go back to the presuppositions Tim made last week. He said if the Bible is God communicating to us and it's God communicating to us without error, so when we read Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," we get our answer to the first basic question of life. A personal God created all that exists. That is shaping for us.

Let me give you another question - another basic question of life. **Why does man exist?** Atheism says "Man is only a product of chance in a closed universe." Pantheism says "Like all existence, man is a manifestation of God." Christian Theism says this: "Man was created by God, distinct from all non-personal creation. We were created distinct, which leads us to a third question."

What is the basis for human dignity? Why do we care when we hear of a mass murder? Why do we think we should treat everybody with equality and respect? Atheism says well "because we're the highest form of evolution." Pantheism says, "There should be nothing distinct between us. We're all trying to become one as God." And Theism says this: "We are made in the image of

God. Man exists for personal relationship with the Creator.” We were made in the image of God and man exists to be in personal relationship with the Creator.

You sit back and you hear those questions and I can give you seven more just like it that I think the book of Genesis helps us understand. Helps us answer, but man let me just break it down to you just within this last week how this affects us. Last Sunday I'm driving home and I hear the terrible news that Rick Warren, beloved pastor right here in America, famous for his Purpose Driven Life book lost his son to suicide. I'm driving, I hear that, I'm heartbroken, I go and I start reading articles. I want to read about it, and then I always kind of skim down to the comments under the article. And you can imagine I just, I feel for the guy because he's a public figure and now he's got to suffer through this publicly with everybody giving their opinions on it. And one of the opinions was this. I read it, it said, "Rick there is no God. And if there is a God he doesn't care about your son." And immediately in my mind I'm thinking whoa. We have this answered. Genesis makes this clear that there is a God and he spoke everything into existence. And because he made us in his image every person on the planet is an image bearer of God. Guess what? He cares about each and every one of us, right? You see how that affects us? It affects us in a massive way as we begin to think through slavery. As we begin to think through all kinds of issues that we want to make sure because God created everybody in the image of him. Everyone matters. And there may be some of us here today saying, you know, I don't know if God cares. God must not care about me. He doesn't even know I'm here, I'm not a blip on his radar. Or maybe you sit back and say, "Has he opened up the newspaper? It's a scary world we live in." Let me be very clear with you. God created the heavens and the earth and he made each and every one of us in his own image. And even though we blew it, even though sin has destroyed his original plan, God hasn't given up. And God called out one man and he continued that promise through his son, Isaac and Jacob. And he sat back and he said, "I need to have a people who will represent me in the world so that I can bless every person on the planet through them." If God didn't care he wouldn't go to those extremes. If God didn't care and have a plan, why The Big Picture and why the story? My hope and prayer is for everyone sitting in this room today, is that you would be clear that God made you, God loves you, God has a plan for you and he's got a plan for all of humanity that he is playing out through The Big Picture.

I'm just going to give you a spoiler, are you ready? Moses won't be the hero next week. Moses won't be the hero. Joshua's not going to be the hero, Sampson's not going to be the hero, Gideon's not going to be the hero, David's not going to be the hero. You want to know who the hero is? I'm just going to give you a spoiler right here. His name is Jesus Christ. And he is the one that God is going to bless all of humanity through. Through his death, burial, and

resurrection which we just celebrated in communion a few minutes ago. If you've never put your faith and trust in him, you can do that and know that God infinitely cares for you. Let's pray.

Father I love you and I thank you for your word, I thank you for the book of Genesis as it helps us understand you and what you're about. It helps us see that you created, that you're powerful, you made us in your image and you care desperately about us even when we fall, even when we sin, even as humanity seems to be spiraling out of control with the sin issue, God you care. So Father as we go through this Big Picture, I pray that as each hero points to the greatest hero that God we would have The Big Picture view of what you are doing and your plan for the ages. God it's in your Son's name that we pray. Amen.

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