

*Thank you for taking your small group through The Story. This set of Small Group Study Guides provides you with three basic tools to use every week with your group to enhance your connection with the Bible and with each other.*

### TIMELESS TRUTH & CHAPTER SUMMARY

**The Timeless Truth** captures the essence of the chapter in a few powerful words. This is a great phrase to actually have your group learn and repeat out loud to cement the big idea in their minds.

**The Chapter Summary** is intended to be read out loud to your group. Select a good reader from your group to start off your meeting by reading the summary. Because this is a long passage that provides key teaching, you may wish to send the summary to the reader ahead of time so he or she can run through it beforehand.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After the Chapter Summary is read, transition to the discussion time by asking the Icebreaker Question. There are 8-10 discussion questions provided, which is really more than can be used in one study session, so select the ones that best meet the needs of your group.

Here are a few guidelines for facilitating a meaningful small group discussion:

1. **It's the inside that counts.** Sincerity, honesty and authenticity are key qualities for any group leader. Your openness will set the tone and direction. Remember, trust is the foundation for building significant relationships in your group.
2. **Ask good questions.** The key to leading a good discussion is asking good questions. A key step in asking a good question is to patiently wait for someone to answer. Good questions produce an interchange of ideas and insights so we can learn from each other and deepen relationships. Be sure to focus on the questions that encourage personal reflection and application to daily life.
3. **Learn to listen.** Nothing says "I care" like taking the time to really listen. Listen with your heart, your eyes, and your ears. Good listeners draw information from the group by:
  - Rephrasing what's said to make sure you heard correctly
  - Asking them to expand on their comments to clarify what was said
  - Understanding what people are feeling as well as what they are saying
4. **Transformation not just information.** The goal of a small group is not just to learn the facts and details about the stories in the Bible but to be transformed by them. Share with your group how *The Story* is reshaping your own life.
5. **Make prayer a priority.** Praying for your group members and your study time is the best way to prepare. Make prayer a part of your study time. Also, be careful about asking others to pray before they are ready for such a step.

**Additional group discussion questions** for all chapters can be found starting on page 473 of *The Story*. Refer to these questions if you need other ideas for your particular group.

*Note: All page numbers referenced throughout these study guides are from The Story, 2011 Edition.*

## PERSONAL DEVOTION QUESTIONS

This section is actually a handout that you can copy and distribute to your group to use during their personal devotions in the coming week as they read the next chapter in *The Story*. The last activity of every group meeting is, “*In the time remaining, ask your group members to share any of their personal reflection insights from their journal entries.*” This is a reference to their answers to these Personal Devotion Questions. So, **before your first meeting**, distribute the questions for Chapter 1 (provided on the following page). Encourage group members to read Chapter 1 before your first meeting and to record their answers to these questions in a journal; they will be given an opportunity to share their insights at the close of the group discussion.

## CHAPTER 1, THE BEGINNING OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

*Journal your answers to these questions as you read through the chapter this week. You may wish to read one day and journal the next, or spread the questions over the whole week.*

## DAY 1

1. God created Eve because he felt that it was not good for Adam to be alone (p. 4). When have you felt most alone? How would your life be different if you were experiencing deep community? What might you do help someone else who is alone and isolated?
2. Adam and Eve hid from God because they felt shame and guilt. Both failed to accept responsibility for their sins and failures. Often, the first step to the healing and the restoring of relationships is to accept responsibility for our mistakes. What, if anything, do you need to own this week?
3. Adam and Eve's disastrous decisions demonstrate our own inability to choose well between right and wrong. Describe a wrong choice you made and how it affected your life. How has God helped you heal from that choice?

## DAY 2

1. Cain's feelings of jealousy and hurt led to Abel's murder. Is there anyone in your family who you have hurt, or who has hurt you? What might you do to reconcile with this person? Identify a family relationship in your own life that is loving and secure. Share your thankfulness for that person with a note or phone call.
2. When God looked at the earth and saw that it was only evil all the time, He "*regretted that he had made human beings, and His heart was deeply troubled.*" Our hearts are often deeply troubled when we observe the horrors of this world. How might you respond to someone who asks how a good God could allow so much evil to take place?

## DAY 3

1. God pursued Adam and Eve after they had sinned. God pursued Cain even as Cain was steeped in anger. Describe a time in your own life that God sought you out. What happened? How did it deepen your relationship with God?
2. Noah is noted for being "righteous" and "blameless." Are there any areas of your life that could be described this way? What areas of your life are most difficult to act righteously or blamelessly? Who do you know who could hold you accountable for these things?