

Covenant Gifts

Bible Stories and Interactive Lessons

“Make Your Starting Point Certain”

(2 Peter 1: 10)



Prologue

Where do I start?

Start with the God of the Bible. How? Where?

“God started everything” * (Genesis 1:1, the Bible)

The first words in the Bible assert that God is the original, personal, and true Starting Point¹ for everything else. This is where your life and mine start, where the whole universe begins. They are the most important words in human history.

* **“beginning”-“start”**—“created”—“God”—“everything”
(Hebrew Bible word order for the first most important sentence)

The first story (Story One) about the creation of the universe and of the first humans is completely true². But the *main purpose* for the story is to assure us that we are not alone. God is not silent. He lovingly provides us everything we need and openly reveals what we need to know to make sense of what we are experiencing.

How does He do this? Hundreds of stories about real people living in actual situations fill the pages of the Bible. God is the main ‘person’ in every story, even when He operates ‘unseen’. As we read these real life stories, our hearts are gripped and our minds begin to understand the real God, and ourselves as well.

Every story reveals at least one of God’s Starting Points for life, truths we would not otherwise know. Truths to help us navigate the demands of everyday life. Truths critical to our well-being in covenant³ with Him.

¹ What is a Starting Point / Assumption / Preconception? What do we naturally do when we reach the limits of what we **know**? We **assume**.

What do we assume? We have to start somewhere. We tend to start with what is self-evidently obvious or true to us. We do this mostly unconsciously. **Note:** people use various words like ‘belief’, ‘preconception’, ‘bias’, or other similar words for ‘Starting Point’.

Everything we think, say and do is based on what we **assume** to be true about reality, about ourselves and about those around us. The main point of the Bible and of this study is not to answer all our questions or to give complete instructions to cover every situation. Instead it is to make sure we are pointed in the right direction, that we are beginning from accurate Starting Points (see **Examples** p. 3). God has given us the faculty of discovery if we start right.

² The Bible is ‘pre-scholarly’ = true, but adapted to its first audience, not scientifically detailed. It is a realistic book in contrast with the idealized views of religion today (Schaeffer 1975, 43).

³ Covenant: God’s unbreakable love commitment to us.

At the end of every story you will find a section to help 'connect the dots'. It will always include the following thought / discussion questions.

Thought / discussion questions:

1. Pray, and then read or listen to the story
2. Retell the story in your own words
3. Discover the significance of this story. When you sense that you are familiar with it, select the most appropriate question(s) to ask yourself and/or discuss with others:

Q1: What does this story tell me about God?

Q2: What does this story tell me about the people in the story?

+ One more of the following:

Q3: What does this have to do with me / what did I learn / what changes will I trust the Holy Spirit to make in me?

Q4: Who am I going to tell?

Q5: How am I going to pray?

Additional material and questions are provided on the last page(s) of each lesson. These are intended for further study and/or discussion, and will include two sections (both intended for group interaction):

- **Food for further thought and discussion** (further Scripture, info and questions)
- **Wrap up** (what is not explicitly *taught*, but leads to what next and/or *action points*)

At the very end of this booklet *Covenant Gifts* under 'Supplemental Material' you will find lists of Starting Points and Covenant Stipulations, as well as step-by-step Instructions for filling out the Work Box, and even more research notes and suggestions.

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