

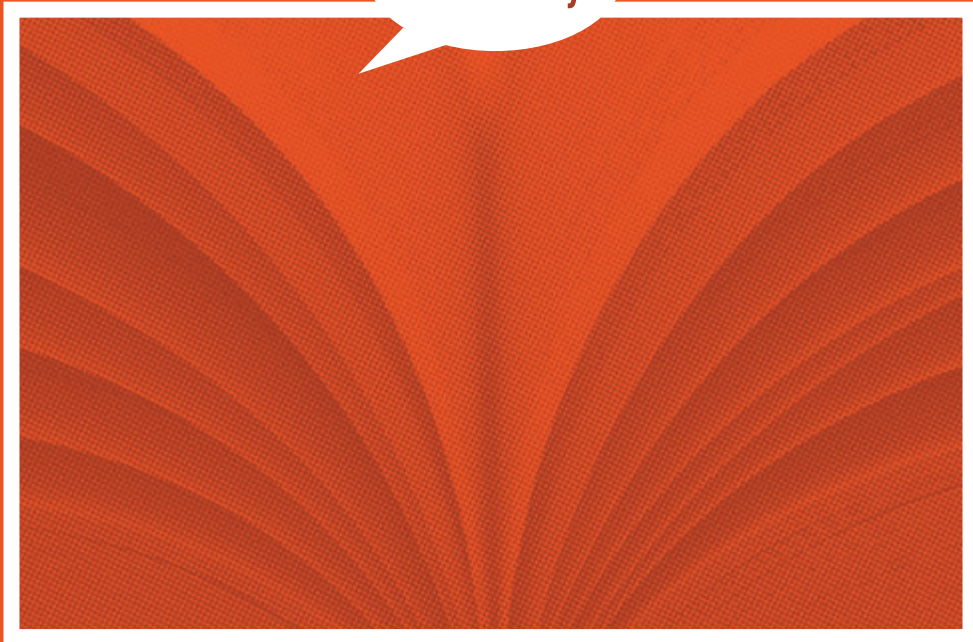
# STUDY GUIDE

Epic: The Storyline of the Bible

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# EPIC

## Study Guide

*The Study Guide* questions at the end of each chapter have been designed for your personal benefit. *All* questions can be used for personal study and, if you're part of a discussion group, for preparation for your group meeting. If you are part of a small group, you will find the questions preceded by the group icon  are especially useful for discussion. Your group leader can choose from among those questions when the group meets.

## Chapter I: Redemption Prompted

### Icebreakers (for groups)

*Breaker 1: How good is your sense of direction? Describe a time when you got lost.*

*Breaker 2: How significant a role—as a roadmap for life—did the Bible play in your family as you were growing up?*



1. What is the theme of the Bible's storyline and what does it mean? Why is it important to understand this theme as you read the Bible?

2. What does God promise to *redeem* people from in the following verses?

Exodus 6:6 (compare with John 8:34, 36)

Psalms 49:7–9, 15

Psalms 107:2

Luke 21:25–28

Galatians 3:10, 13

Titus 2:11–14

1 Peter 1:18, 19

3. When God prohibits Adam from eating the forbidden fruit, the death penalty for violating this command seems overly severe (Genesis 2:17). But why is death (spiritual, physical, and eternal) a natural consequence for disobeying God's commands?
4. It is difficult to take God's commands seriously if we are unfamiliar with them. On a separate sheet of paper, see how many of the Ten Commandments you can list—without looking them up in your Bible. Then read Exodus 20:1–17 and add to your list any that you missed. Once you're done, circle the top three commandments that pose the biggest challenge to you.

5. Read Genesis 3:1–What are the three strategies Satan used to undermine God’s command and entice Adam and Eve to sin?



- Describe how Satan has used (or is using) one of the Genesis 3 strategies on you. What other “schemes” (Paul’s word in Ephesians 6:11) does Satan use to tempt you to disobey God?

6. Adam blames Eve and God for his disobedience. Eve blames the serpent. With one or two of your most frequent sins in mind, *who* or *what* do you tend to blame for your disobedience?



- Why is it our natural inclination to cover up our sins instead of owning up to them?

7. What were the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin?



- What other consequences for sin have you (or others) experienced?

8. Summarize the references to Christ’s coming redemption that appear in Genesis 3.



- When it comes to sin, we have all responded to the invitation to “take and eat.” Have you also responded to the invitation to “take and eat” Christ by confessing your sins and asking Him to forgive them, and then receiving Him into your life by faith? If yes, briefly describe how this happened for you. If no, what has kept (is keeping) you from doing this?

## Chapter 2: Redemption Prepared

### Icebreaker (for groups)

*What family traditions do you observe in preparing for Christmas?*

1. What is Abraham commended for in the following passages?

Romans 4:18–21 and Galatians 3:6–9

Hebrews 11:8–10

James 2:20–22



2. Abraham's life illustrates how genuine faith and obedience go hand in hand. Describe a situation in which *your* faith was tested by requiring a demonstration of personal obedience.

3. What threefold promise did God make to Abraham?



4. List the three kinds of laws that are sprinkled throughout the first five books of the Old Testament. Explain the extent to which each kind of law is applicable to our lives today.



5. Why is reading through the ceremonial laws of Leviticus still worthwhile for us?

6. Who led Israel in initially conquering and occupying the Promised Land? What is disturbing about the contents of the Old Testament book that bears his name?



- How would you defend Old Testament warfare to a skeptic?

7. What cycle repeats itself, again and again, in the book of Judges? Do you see any parallels here to the Christian life? Explain.

8. What is God's purpose for His people? How was this purpose somewhat fulfilled during Israel's Golden Age?



9. Give some examples of how today we might attract unbelievers to Christ or repel them from Christ.

*Attract:*

*Repel:*



10. List the five *Books of Wisdom* and note the topic which each one covers. Circle the one that you could use most in your life right now, and explain why.



11. What lesson(s) might we learn from what happened to Israel in the Old Testament?

## Chapter 3: Redemption Prophesied

### Icebreaker (for groups)

*Are you into poetry? Why or why not? If you are a fan of poetry, who is your favorite poet and/or what is your favorite poem?*

1. How are the Major Prophets different from the Minor Prophets? What are some of the general characteristics of Old Testament prophetic literature?



2. As forth-telling “preachers of repentance,” what were the three main emphases of the prophets’ sermons? Why do you think they began their messages by reminding the people of God’s laws?

3. Make a list of all the laws that Jeremiah refers to in 7:1–11. Circle the ones that are still applicable to our lives today. What does this exercise tell you?



4. Jeremiah’s audience tended to ignore God’s laws due to their mistaken assumption that their disobedience was compensated for by their attendance at the temple. In what ways do we dismiss the importance of obeying God’s laws today?

5. Read Deuteronomy 28:1–68 and make a list of the blessings that accompany obedience and the curses that accompany disobedience.

*Blessings of Obedience*

*Curses of Disobedience*

6. Why do you think the portion of Deuteronomy 28 that spells out curses is three times the length of the portion that spells out blessings?



- So many Christian sermons and books today are slanted in the opposite direction—emphasizing the *positive* (blessings), almost to the exclusion of the *negative* (curses). Why do you think that's the case? What is the potential downside of this imbalance?



7. God repeatedly pleads with His people to *turn* from their sins and *return* to him. What do the following references tell you about this *God* who constantly urges us to repent? (These verses are printed out in chapter three, so you don't have to look them up.) Why should such a profile encourage us to regularly confess and forsake our sins?

*Jeremiah 18:11; Ezekiel 18:30; Ezekiel 33:11;*

*Hosea 14:1, 2; Joel 2:13*

8. Why is it important to understand Old Testament history (not end-times events) when reading the *predictive* prophecies in Isaiah–Malachi?
- Where is a good place to find a quick summary of each writing prophet's historical context? How will this help you better understand the books they wrote?

9. What do the following prophecies proclaim regarding Christ's first coming?

*Daniel 9:24*

*Micah 5:2*

*Zechariah 9:9; 11:11–12; 12:10*

*Isaiah 53:5, 6*



- Why do you think God prophesied Christ's coming—as opposed to just having Him show up?





10. Isaiah 9: 6–7 proclaim a Christ who will come again. What encouragement do you draw from this passage?

## Chapter 4: Redemption Purchased

### Icebreaker (for groups)

*Describe a time in your life when you really, really wanted something—but couldn't afford it. How would you have felt if somebody had purchased that item for you?*

1. List some of the characteristics that make each of the four Gospels distinct from the others.

*Matthew*

*Mark*

*Luke*

*John*

2. Why do Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John devote a disproportionate amount of their Gospels to describing the events surrounding Jesus' death?

3. Describe the following three views of the atonement. Explain why each of the first two views is not the *best* interpretation of Jesus' death (although both make valid points). What evidence is there in Scripture that the third view is the central focus of the cross?

*Victor*

*Example*

*Sacrifice*



- What impacted you most as you read these (all three) descriptions of Jesus' mission?



4. Do you ever wrestle with the thought that you have been too gullible in accepting the Bible's affirmation that Jesus is fully God and fully man? Explain.



- In terms of the atonement, why is it important that Jesus be both fully God and fully man?

5. What evidences do you see in the following four passages for Jesus' deity and humanity?

*Deity**Humanity**Matthew 1:18–23**Matthew 3:13–17**Matthew 9:1–8**Matthew 27:50–54*

6. Occasionally you will hear someone make the assertion that Jesus Himself never claimed to be God. List three quotes from the lips of Jesus that make a case for His deity.



7. Besides the importance of Jesus' deity and humanity for the atonement, why else might you be glad to have a Savior who is both God and man?

*God**Man*

8. Ask the average person about what Jesus taught and they're likely to reduce it to: *we're supposed to love each other*. Yes, Jesus taught that. But He also taught a whole lot more. Unfortunately, many of us are familiar with Jesus' miracles and the events that surrounded His birth and death, but are sketchy when it comes to His teaching. Read Matthew 5–7 (yes, all three chapters). This is Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. List at least five demands that Jesus makes of His followers in this sermon.



9. What evidences might you expect to see in a person who is truly a Christ follower?





- What transformations has Christ brought to *your* life?

## Chapter 5: Redemption Proclaimed

### Icebreaker (for groups)

*Recall the last time you received some really good news. What was it? What motivated you to share that good news with others?*

1. What is the relationship between the book of Acts and the twenty-one New Testament epistles? Why is *witnesses* considered to be the key word in Acts?
2. Read Acts 2:22–23. What was the favorite message of first-century Christ followers? What aspect of this message did they especially emphasize? Why?
-  • Is this a message that you find easy to bring up in conversation? Why or why not? Why must our message be *verbal* (with our *lips*), not just *visual* (with our *lives*)?
-  3. Read Acts 4:16–20. What compelled Peter and John to speak boldly about Christ? What other motivations come to mind that should stimulate us to be more outspoken in sharing Christ with others?
4. According to Acts 8:1, 4, how did God prompt the spread of the gospel after it had become stalled in Jerusalem? Who did the spreading and why is that significant? How might God use a similar tactic to make *us* gospel-spreaders?

5. What is meant by each of the steps in the *invest-inform-invite* strategy?

*Invest*

*Inform*

*Invite*



- Which of these three steps is easiest for you? Why? Which is most difficult? Why? What could you do to improve at the step you find most difficult?

6. What was it about the early Christ followers in Acts 2:44–47 that gave credibility to their witness? (Give specifics.)

- We sometimes glibly express a hope that people will see the difference Jesus makes in our lives. What sorts of differences might cause them to sit up and listen to our message?



7. As a sampling of a New Testament epistle, read through the letter of Philippians (a brief four chapters). Note anything Paul says to these Christ followers that you would imagine might make their lives and witness more attractive to unbelievers. Write down 8–10 of these insights.

8. Following the outline of Acts 1:8, what would be *your*:

*Jerusalem?*

*Judea and Samaria?*

*Ends of the earth?*



9. How can you personally participate in the spread of the Gospel around the world? Which of these means are you currently engaging in and to what extent?

## Chapter 6: Redemption Perfected

### Icebreaker (for groups)

*Describe one of your favorite endings to a book you've read or a movie you've seen. What did you like about that ending? What elements make for a great climax to a story?*

1. What factors make the book of Revelation so difficult to interpret?
2. List the five main events that are described in Revelation and which culminate in *Redemption Perfected*.
3. What are five characteristics of the Great Tribulation? Once you list them, circle those that seem to be increasingly evident in our world today.



- What are some practical ways in which you could prepare yourself for the possibility of living on earth through the Great Tribulation?



4. How eagerly (be honest) are you looking forward to the return of Christ? What are some good reasons to long for his appearing? (You'll find one in 2 Timothy 4:8.)
5. According to Revelation 19:11–16, 21, how will Jesus ultimately defeat His enemies? What does that tell you about Jesus?
6. Explain the *amillennial* interpretation of Revelation 20:1–What is one of the flaws of this interpretation?

7. What three things will Jesus Christ clearly demonstrate by reigning on this earth for a thousand years prior to establishing a new heaven and a new earth?



8. What impact does the description of the final judgment in Revelation 20:11–15 have on your life today?



- Are you sure that your name is written in the *book of life*? Why or why not?



9. Read Revelation 21 and Make a list of those aspects of the new heaven and new earth that you are